



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Commons Home Affairs Committee

Inquiry into Islamophobia: evidence session

Q2. Chair (Yvette Cooper, Labour): ... I will start by asking all of you what your response is to the APPG's definition of Islamophobia. ...

Assistant Commissioner Basu (National Lead for Counter-terrorism Policing, Metropolitan Police): ... The fact is I think it is too broad. There are a couple of things I absolutely agree with. The first is the work of the APPG. I think we are trying to be very clinical and logical about a very emotional issue. Do I think there is an issue with Muslims being discriminated against and rising hate crime? Absolutely. Do I think it is exponential? Absolutely ... I absolutely see the need for a definition. Do I agree with the term Islamophobia? I think it has become common parlance. Why would I seek a different term? I have no issue whatsoever with the term. Do I think it needs defining because of the emotional resonance it has among some individual Muslims and some Muslim communities? Yes, I think it does.

... [the APPG definition] is too wide for a number of reasons. One of the things it does is conflate issues of race and religion. ... It is also so broad that anybody who criticises, insults—even in a democracy where it does not reach a criminal threshold—or satirises Islam would be called out under that definition for being Islamophobic and racist.

The worst-case scenario for me has already happened, which is, precisely because I cannot accept that definition, policing has been accused of thinking that particularly the techniques that I use in countering terrorism are somehow Islamophobic or racist. ... I think the consequence is that the the tiny fraction of people I deal with in the Muslim community who are extremists or even terrorists would be able to use that definition to frustrate some of the powers of my officers. ...

Q3. Assistant Commissioner Hewitt (Chair, National Police Chiefs' Council): ... I absolutely accept there is a need for a definition of this issue. ... I absolutely understand the concern, and in some cases the fear, that is felt within Muslim communities. I am entirely supportive of the work to try to arrive at a definition that we can all collectively work to.

If we seek a definition that is very short, it lacks some of specificity that I would want, in relation to officers on the ground applying this definition and using it in the work that they

do, day in and day out, to protect the Muslim community and deal with any offences that are committed against it. ... What I want us to try to get to is a definition that is very complementary to the work that we do and to our guidance, and that can be understood and used practically by police officers as they go about their business attempting to protect communities. ...

Baroness Falkner of Margravine: ... Muslims are such a diverse community. We are diverse not only in our geographical representation but in our understanding of the theology. ... The idea that collectively the Muslims in the United Kingdom will come to a view of a differentiation of one size that fits all is, first of all, flawed.

Secondly, I have profound problems with the APPG's definition. I think it is way too wide. ... My second objection is that it is, unlike what has been said when the report was published, meant to be legally binding. ...

The final thing I would say is that the expressions of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness are extremely challenging. ...

Q4. Baroness Falkner of Margravine: ... You have to look across the range at what the problem is that attempting to define Islamophobia is intended to solve. Once you arrive at what the problem is, you can decide whether you need a definition, or whether you need some instruments in law to help make the job of law enforcement easier when they are dealing with hate crime. ...

Trevor Phillips (Chairman, Index on Censorship and Senior Fellow, Policy Exchange): ... [the APPG definition] adds nothing to our legal or practical ability to protect Muslims from violence and distress. Secondly, it makes no attempt to address the principal causes of Muslim disadvantage, which are employment discrimination and educational failure, and, if we are concerned about violence, the principal cause of death among young Muslim men in this city is knife crime. It confuses race and religion, to the detriment of British Muslims, by limiting reasonable adjustments. ...

... in practice it creates two different standards of speech for Muslims and non-Muslims—who can say what. Finally—again, a point that has not been raised, and I am sure this is unintended—it will introduce consequences for employers and public authorities, who must be required to treat people of other religions and beliefs in the same way as this definition would suggest. ...

Q5. Stuart C McDonald (SNP): ... could I revisit the question of whether we need a new definition at all? Both Assistant Commissioners have said that you welcome a new definition, just not this particular one. Why do you both feel that we need a new definition of Islamophobia?

Assistant Commissioner Hewitt: I think that over a number of years there has been an emerging sense of the Muslim community in this country feeling under attack in a range of different ways. If you look specifically at hate crime figures, that is a rise, and there is a very clear rise in the hate crime figures. ...

There is an enormous amount of work that is done in policing to engage with the Muslim community in order to understand the fears of that community and to protect those communities. ... From a purely policing perspective, I think it is really important that we recognise the fact that this particular group of people in our country faces a range of disadvantages, particularly, from my perspective, the range of hate crime. It would be important for everyone in society, for Government, all Departments and all agencies, including the police, to have a definition that we can utilise and, as I said at the beginning, equally important for those people who are Muslims in this country to feel that that issue is recognised and is being addressed. ...

Q6. Assistant Commissioner Hewitt: ... The 2001 amendment of the Crime and Disorder Act, which was the original hate crime legislation, introduced religiously motivated hate crime. In dealing specifically with hate crime, we work to that guidance. In that sense, we do not lack a definition. The broader requirement for a definition seems to me to

be that everybody should accept the range of issues and challenges that are faced by the Muslim community in this country. ... I think there is a parallel with the antisemitism definition, and the work that was undertaken there, and the impact that that has had in recognising that particular form, in my world, of hate crime. ...

Q7. Baroness Falkner of Margravine: ... The OSCE ... has quite a good definition. It does not use the term Islamophobia, which I myself am uncomfortable with ... It refers to anti-Muslim bias. I would prefer and have used anti-Muslim hatred, but I accept that hatred is narrower than bias. ...

The antisemitism definition that we debated so much last year was intended to be a definition to help guide; it was not meant to be legal. Two or three days ago, you had the Minister for Education telling universities that they needed to adopt it. That clashes very directly with the public bodies and universities' obligation to protect freedom of speech. Now you have a Government Minister sitting there saying, "We never intended this to apply across the board, but I think universities should adopt it". ...

Q.10. Kate Green (Labour): ... I met a number of members of the Muslim community in Greater Manchester last month with Afzal Khan, and I must say they welcomed the concept of having a definition, and the definition that the APPG is putting forward. I was interested in the point you were making about us already having a legislative framework in relation to religious discrimination ... they have never been satisfied with that legislation. They do not feel it affords a strong enough legal framework. ...

Trevor Phillips: I suspect that what they are dissatisfied with is the execution or the enforcement of legislation. I would be very surprised, to be frank, if most people knew much about the actual legislation. ... If you leave aside the things that I think most British Muslims are most concerned about, which are to do with employment and discrimination and so on, maybe in the hostile climate of the far right, and you focus on the issues raised by the APPG, which really are about religiously, politically and sometimes criminally motivated violence, the truth is that if you look at the law, we have instruments. They are called harassment, they are incitement, they are assault. In almost every single case that I have been able to look at, those are the legal instruments that have been used to protect people. I have no doubt that people say what you say, but I suspect that what they are more talking about is the extent and effectiveness of the enforcement of the existing law. ...

Q12. Assistant Commissioner Hewitt: ... I think the law is very clear for both racially and religiously motivated offences. It is important to point out that in many cases where a Muslim is a victim of an offence, it may well be racially as well as religiously motivated, if they are a person from a minority ethnic group. ...

I can absolutely say that hate crime is an issue that is taken seriously by the police. You can see that in the level of rises in the recording of hate crime that we have seen over the last number of years. There is very clear guidance for police officers on how to enforce that law. I absolutely accept—particularly, I suspect, in offences that are not physical assaults, that are the lower level, the very insidious and hurtful and harmful offences that people suffer—that it is difficult to get successful prosecutions. ...

However, I do not think the definition as currently formed would impact necessarily on the way that the police operate. ... What I want is a definition that absolutely supports and reinforces the work that we are doing. ...

Q13. Assistant Commissioner Hewitt: ... The key one for me is that the current definition twice defines the issue as racist and uses that term. I absolutely understand the common use of the word "racist" and why the community feel that that describes what they are suffering. As I say, in some cases there will no doubt be a racist motivation in the perpetrator, because the person that they are abusing or assaulting is a person from an ethnic minority. But that is not the case for all Muslims, and often the offence will be religiously motivated—in other words, the person perceives or recognises the person to be of the Muslim faith. ... I think it is unhelpful to have that inconsistency between the law

around what is currently defined as a race, and then describing any prejudiced action against a Muslim as being racist. ...

Baroness Falkner of Margravine: ... A very close relative of mine recently had an attack that could have been defined as both Islamophobia and racism. ... When you get a large majority—I do not know the exact figure; I suspect that the percentage is in the high 90s—of Muslims in the UK being visibly different, as some of us are, then there is confusion. When my relative said to me, “What shall I report to the police?” I suggested that she report it as both an Islamophobic and a racist attack.

Assistant Commissioner Hewitt: It would be recorded as such as well. We will often record the motivation as both. ...

Q15. Trevor Phillips: ... I do not myself entirely buy this parallel, but if you want to consider that, if you look at the Community Security Trust website, it has a list of prosecutions that took place for antisemitic violence of the kind you are talking about. If you look at the 10 prosecutions that it lists in the second six months of last year, they were all under public order, sending threatening communications, and assault, and a few of them were racially or religiously aggravated. However, the go-to piece of legislation to deal with this kind of thing is usually public order, assault, threatening communications, and very occasionally something that is racially aggravated. ...

Q18. Assistant Commissioner Basu: ... when I look at the breadth of [the APPG] definition and I listen to Lord Carlile, who spent 10 years as an independent reviewer of terrorism legislation and was a constructive critic of it, and he is telling me that Prevent and Pursue as Government policy could be affected by this, I have to take that seriously. ...

I think this is all about community confidence. We have had a long debate here about the criminal interpretation. I have heard what APPG chairs have said over the last couple of days—that this is not meant to be a legal definition. ... everyone who gave evidence thought it was going to be a legal definition. Professionally, I have to think of what the consequences would be of it being a legal definition.

I am really conflicted about this. This is a definition that was designed to protect people like me. I have spent 51 years dealing with racism. The vast amount of racism I have had in my life has been the perception that I might be Muslim, and I am not. I look at that and I feel personally conflicted about saying I cannot accept this definition, but professionally, for me, it is about community confidence. I think a lot of those communities will feel that not accepting this without any question has reduced their confidence in me, and I am horrified by that. ...

Q19. Rehman Chishti: ... Of course there is hatred towards people of different faiths, and the Muslim community face that. ... It is not the Muslim communities feeling under attack; Muslim communities are under attack, because the reality is, as you said, by far the largest number of incidents affect that community. ...

There is no unanimous support for the definition before us from the different diverse Muslim communities across the United Kingdom. ... The APPG has come up with a definition, but ... the definition does not have cross-spectrum support from the Muslim community. ...

Assistant Commissioner Basu: ... this APPG report ... was designed to do two things. One was to, quite rightly, protect the Muslim communities and give them some confidence that we all understand that discrimination and hatred is real, and we do. ... It is also designed to be a broad consultation that reached broad agreement.

I do not think it achieves either of those two things ... But I have certainly had some very strong feedback that people are unhappy that we would not unquestioningly accept this. ...

Q20. Rehman Chishti (Conservative): ... The procedure that was followed before one got to the definition of antisemitism—was the same procedure followed for the definition of Islamophobia? If you are going to make quite clearly a defined wording, you have to follow the same procedure. ...

Trevor Philips: No. The history of the IHRA definition and its purpose was completely different. Let's leave aside the question of whether you are talking about equivalence, which I do not think you are, to be absolutely frank. Muslims are a billion-wide, global, multiracial, multi-ethnic community. Jews are something quite different, and in our law they are also a race. The equivalence that is being imposed on this seems odd to me. ...

Q22. Trevor Philips: If what you want to do is apply a metric of numbers of people consulted, length of time taken, and stages, then this definition has not gone through a fraction of what the IHRA went through. It has not, for example, been considered at any international forum, as far as I know. The IHRA was considered over a period, I would guess, of about eight years internationally ...

Q24. Baroness Falkner of Margravine: ... I think that to draw a moral equivalence between the long history of antisemitism in Europe and the current state of anti-Muslim hatred and bias in Europe is a profound mistake. ...

Q29. Assistant Commissioner Basu: ... I am not going to speak for him, but I read what Lord Carlile said; a code of practice that explained and gave very clear examples of what was meant by Islamophobia and what was not would be really useful. I could absolutely live with that, legal or not. ...

Q30. Assistant Commissioner Basu: ... I do not think it is for policing to be involved in defining this. I think this is about the people that it affects. ... it needs to be broadly accepted and it is not, even by the communities that it seeks to protect. ...

The one thing I think does need to be addressed is it is not just about rooting in racism. I think it is rooting in prejudice and bigotry and that is about anti-race and anti-religious feeling. The fact that it is rooted so clearly in racism—others much more qualified than me have said why that is an issue. ...

Q34. Chair: If the examples that the APPG has put in its report and its conclusion were made more explicitly and formally, or clarified as being part of the definition that they were proposing, would that cause any challenges to you for the policing issues that you have raised?

Assistant Commissioner Basu: ... I believe in the definition, I believe there needs to be a definition, and I have no problem with the term Islamophobia at all. I think if it is defined in a way that does not allow people to misuse it ... I would completely accept that. ...

Q36. Assistant Commissioner Basu: ... There is a very tiny fraction of the Muslim community who already see, for instance, Prevent as being a way of securitising the Muslim community and seeing the Muslim community through a counter-terrorism lens. I fundamentally disagree with that, but there is a small, very vocal, very well publicised community that would effectively say Prevent is a racist, Islamophobic tool, based on this definition. ...

That is fine for me; I am an Assistant Commissioner, and I wear all this braid, and I have broad shoulders and a lot of experience. When I speak to police constables and members of staff who are going into large rooms where they are being heckled and called racist and Islamophobic for trying to prevent somebody going down that path, I am thinking about them and their ability and their resilience to deliver that vital work, work that I have described as the most important pillar of this country's counter-terrorism strategy. ... This will add to that small fraction of people who will choose to use this definition to say it is Islamophobic and racist.

I will finish with one point. Some people I deeply respect, senior members of the Muslim community, think that by what I have said already in public, I have somehow said that my officers' policies and tactics are Islamophobic and racist. I am finding that it hard to live with ... I need to say this on the record ... Islamophobia exists; discrimination and hate crime is disproportionately increasing in that community. ...

Q40. Assistant Commissioner Basu: I was very clear when I opened that I think that

definition is required by communities who feel under threat because no one is taking them seriously. This is a community confidence issue. We already deal in policing the criminal end of this. ...

Q41. Tim Loughton (Conservative): For you, this is not a matter of legal enforcement. It is a matter of assurance for the Muslim community that they should have some confidence in the seriousness with which this is taken, first, by Government and people in positions of political power and secondly by the police and other enforcement agencies. ...

Q42. Tim Loughton: Can you define, Assistant Commissioner, what is Muslimness? How do you define Muslimness? If you are faced with somebody who may be subject to a charge of falling foul of the Islamophobic laws, how would you define Muslimness?

Assistant Commissioner Hewitt: I do not think, first of all, it is for me to define Muslimness.

Tim Loughton: You are going to be investigating it.

Assistant Commissioner Hewitt: I am going to be investigating crime based on the law. As I said earlier, either an individual or any other individual can assert that an offence was aggravated due to religious hatred, and they will provide the evidence that supports that. When you read the report, the key point is that this has come from all the consultation with Muslim communities to come up with a description that those people who were consulted agreed was the best way to describe Muslimness. ...

Q43. Tim Loughton: Do you think it is Muslimness as perceived by the perpetrator or the victim?

Assistant Commissioner Hewitt: In reality, it probably is both. The perpetrator will have a motivation for why he or she is doing what they are doing, and if that offence is either racially or religiously motivated, I assume that is based on them identifying something.

Q44. Tim Loughton: If somebody comes to you to say, "I have been under attack because of my Muslimness", you will say it is not for you to define. You are going to be investigating it, though, are you not? If the perpetrator said, "No, I did not insult or offend you because of your Muslimness", presumably it is the victim who trumps, because it is his or her perception, is it not? They know what Muslimness actually is.

Assistant Commissioner Hewitt: ... If somebody said to me, "It is because of my Muslimness", the first question I would ask is, "In what sense are you saying that?" ... the suspect will deny that what he was doing was what we are suggesting he did. ...

Q45. Assistant Commissioner Hewitt: ... The legislation that we have around hate crime, the hate crime legislation, is quite clear that the victim and any other person can define that they feel that offence was motivated by whichever form of hate crime. ... How that person chooses to describe their particular characteristic that falls under the legislation will always be different in every case, and in many cases you do not necessarily have a title. I would not sit here and define Jewishness. There will be a whole range of factors that could come to define that. ...

Q52. Trevor Phillips: ... The authors of the report define dress as one expression of Muslimness. The definition refers to targeting expressions of Muslimness. ... people who, frankly, I think should be under no suspicion of being Islamophobic have said things about that form of dress that could conceivably—let us put it as mildly as that—fall under the rubric of targeting that expression of Muslimness. ...

Q54. Toby Perkins (Labour): Baroness Falkner, you said previously that much of the response must come from existing criminal and civil law guidance, rather than the creation of new criminal definitions and categories. ... you have heard representatives of the police say that if we can find an agreeable definition, it will help them to police Islamophobia, and also it will give reassurance to the community. Do you believe that current hate crime legislation is sufficient, and do you believe that it is possible that the kind of definition that AC Basu advocates would be achievable?

Baroness Falkner: ... What I do know is that there is hate crime. I know that, because I get reverse Islamophobia. It is interesting—I am sorry Mr Loughton has left the room—I am told that I am not sufficiently Muslim, possibly because of the way I dress, or possibly because of my demeanour ...

Do you need a review of hate crime to ascertain whether it is fit for purpose? I would be entirely content with that. ...

Q56. Toby Perkins: ... to what extent is the definition of Islamophobia a question for society, and to what extent is it a question purely for people who identify as Muslims? ...

Baroness Falkner: ... a profound change in our cultural, legal, social understanding of a problem, which is what this definition entails, should not be a matter for 4.4% of our population. If you are going to embark on a cultural war, you need to have an informed debate across society about it. It is not a problem for Muslims only. It is also a problem for those people who wish to dissent from prevailing views, who wish to disagree with opinion and who wish to disagree with belief. It should reflect all facets of society. ...

Q57. Janet Daby (Labour): ... Do you view Islamophobia as a form of racism? ...

Baroness Falkner: I know the subjects of Islamophobia are, on the whole, almost entirely of a different race, are a minority group. Yes, in that sense I think the practical manifestations of it are usually directed towards people of my colour and other colour. ... Yes, I think white converts suffer it. ... people particularly do not like their own community adopting the beliefs of another community, and of course white converts experience it. ...

Trevor Phillips: ... we should not slip into treating race and religion as interchangeable. In this country, one third of British Muslims are not south Asians. Over half of British Asians are not Muslims. ...

The vast majority of hate crimes are race hate crimes. The Home Office data, which I just looked up, says that 71,000 hate crimes in 2017 and 2018 were to do with race and 8,300 were to do with religion. That means 76% were racial and 9% were to do with religion. This goes back to the point that Baroness Falkner raised: what are people thinking of themselves as being? ...

Racial equality turns entirely on treating everybody in the same way. Religious equality is exactly the opposite. We give people, for example, opportunities for holidays. Last year Ramadan fell in the same period as GCSE and university exams. Special arrangements were made so that students who were fasting did not have to do exams in the afternoon. If we start to conflate these two things, there will be practical consequences. This is not just a rhetorical issue.

Q61. Chair: ... The antisemitism definition, notwithstanding the different origins and different histories of these definitions, is obviously used by a whole range of different organisations, including, as we know, political parties, to challenge prejudice, discrimination and racism. Do you accept that a definition of Islamophobia could be used in the same effective and constructive way that the definition of antisemitism is used by other organisations—not the criminal justice system, but more widely—to challenge prejudice, to challenge Islamophobia and to challenge racism? ...

Assistant Commissioner Basu: Yes. ...

Q62. Baroness Falkner: Probably not, because politics is about disagreement.

Q63. Trevor Phillips: A definition could be used in the way you suggest, but it is very likely not to be. ...

Q66. Dr Khan (Director, Runnymede Trust): ... I would not advise that a definition of any social phenomenon should be determined by what the police think it should be. ... Of course, the police need an operational interpretation of said definition to do their work, but I would strongly disagree with the view that we should define any form of discrimination on the basis of a police operational definition. ...

I have views about legally binding, and I think that has been overstated. The case of the

IHRA also has to make you a little bit—how to put this? It is not the case that the adoption of the IHRA has ruled out the practice of antisemitism. Adopting it, even by the Labour Party, has not sorted the problem. ...

Wes Streeting (Labour, Co-Chair, All-party Parliamentary Group on British Muslims):

... We could not have been clearer in the introduction [to the APPG report] in saying, “Let us be clear, the aim of establishing a working definition of Islamophobia has neither been motivated by, nor is intended to curtail, free speech or criticism of Islam as a religion”. It also says criticism of religion is a fundamental right of an open society, and is enshrined in our commitment to free speech.

In fact, through the examples that we set out it is clear that the whole purpose of the definition is to try to help people to work through and recognise what Islamophobia is, not only recognise it but then know how to tackle it. ...

The second thing is about legal enforceability. I am not sure where this has popped up. I do not see it contained anywhere in our report. ... What we are putting forward is a working definition that can be used in a practical sense to help people to understand what Islamophobia is and how to eradicate it. ...

The final thing that I found really striking was the almost complete absence of British Muslims from any consideration offered by the last panel. They gave their own individual views, their own professional views, but at no point did they discuss what British Muslims are saying and how they feel ... The fact is that hate crime against Muslims is on the rise. There are laws in place to tackle it, but clearly they are not going far enough to help to educate out the prejudice. We went in with an open mind about whether to use the term anti-Muslim hatred or Islamophobia, and we found overwhelmingly—whatever the etymological roots of the word Islamophobia—that Islamophobia is the word that is used most commonly and frequently by British Muslims, the term they found most helpful. Defining Islamophobia just as anti-Muslim hatred eliminates a whole range of other things that could come into play. ...

Anna Soubry (Change UK, Co-chair, All-party Parliamentary Group on British Muslims) ... you cannot begin to do the real work until you define what Islamophobia is. ...

This entire report is based on evidence and, having listened to and gathered the evidence in an extraordinary manner and heard stories that genuinely shocked me, we then looked at how we got this definition together. ...

... it is not just about hate crime—I really do not want us to get trapped in that—and legal definitions. This is about building a more tolerant society. ...

Q67. Dr Khan: ... The conceptualisation of racism has shifted, but I think it has always been the case that racism was not just about skin colour. The origin of racism as an ideology is about justifying the economic domination of other groups, and to do so there had to be cultural justifications for why it was acceptable to treat people in those ways. There were always pathologies attributed to different groups, whether it was a gypsy, Jew, Muslim or black.

The reality is that those tropes have been the same for centuries. People do not just randomly pick up a trope. They have not creatively come up with a monkey; there have been centuries of tropes about those things. The point around hate crime is that it does not derive merely from the rising testosterone or the criminal aptitude of a particular individual. They are picking up within our society tropes that have existed for centuries, and those tropes are not about skin colour exclusively; they are about what the racist thinks the ethnic minority does or thinks or believes. There is nothing exemplary in that sense about defining Islamophobia as a form of racism. ...

Q68. Anna Soubry: Racism is the belief that one group or race is superior to another, and that that other is inferior. It manifests itself in different ways, but that is at its core, that one group, one race, is superior and another is inferior. Then the prejudice, the intolerance, often hatred or just plain ignorance, flows from that belief of superiority and inferiority. ...

Q69. Anna Soubry: ... the voice that comes out of this is the British Muslim community. This is their definition, based on their experiences and their thought on the situation in our country as it is now. ...

Q70. Tim Loughton: ... I am still not clear whether your recommendation is that your definition should be legally binding or not.

Wes Streeting: No, it is not a statutory definition. ...

Q.75. Wes Streeting: ... nowhere does it say in the report that we anticipate this definition becoming a legal definition ...

Q80. Anna Soubry: ... this is a definition that can extend into all areas, some of which technically fall into civil liability and civil law. The problem is with the attack that has been made on our definition, not just through the prism of counter-terrorism and all of that, but also through the prism ... but it is all being seen through the prism of criminal law and I think that is a big mistake ...

Q83. Tim Loughton: ... What I also do not understand is what your definitions are of the difference between Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hatred, as to why anti-Muslim hatred or variations of that term that have been put forward by other people are not sufficient ...

Wes Streeting: ... in very simple terms in terms of the word “Islamophobia”, it is the word that is most commonly used by British Muslim communities and they felt that word was important and helped to shape their understanding. ...

The second reason is that this goes way beyond anti-Muslim hatred. If it were just the case that we were dealing with hatred, then that would be one thing, but what our report highlights in general terms but also very well-evidenced terms in specific case studies is a discrimination against Muslims that is systemic and is both conscious and unconscious bias. ...

You can change the laws but unless you change people’s everyday practices you don’t change the lived experience of people. ...

This framework is designed not just for legislators but for all of those organisations that come into contact with Muslims, which is everyone, to help them understand what the problem is we are trying to tackle and how we deal with it. ...

Q85. Tim Loughton: ... Who defines Muslimness or perceived Muslimness? ...

Wes Streeting: The victim’s perception of what has happened is obviously paramount ... The reason why we landed on Muslimness or perceived Muslimness is that every other variation we looked at was deficient in one of two ways. Either it did not cover the full scope of an Islamophobic attack or it failed to recognise that people who are not Muslim are also on the receiving end of Islamophobia: the guy in the Sikh turban, for example, who is attacked for being a Muslim because the racist attacking him is too ignorant to recognise the difference between a Sikh guy wearing a turban and a Muslim man. But also, for example, as happened in my constituency, if a brick is thrown through the window of a Muslim community centre and bacon is pinned to the door, that is not an attack on a Muslim, that is not an attack on a person, it is an attack on an expression of Muslimness ...

Q86. Tim Loughton: ... If somebody says, “I fundamentally disagree and I am critical”—in however inflammatory terms—“of Muslims because of my belief in animal welfare standards and my disagreement with halal” or critical of Muslim laws around the treatment of women and gay people as well because that falls below the threshold of what equality means to them, if they are critical of Muslims because of those particular things and others, would that fall foul of Islamophobia under your definition because those are Muslimness?

Wes Streeting: No, and I would challenge you to point to where you would use the definition to shut down criticism on those grounds. I get loads of correspondence as a constituency MP telling me to vote against religious slaughter. I do not think a single one of those people is Islamophobic or antisemitic but I don’t agree with them. ...

Q87. Tim Loughton: ... If you have somebody who regularly kicks their pet dog and cares

not a fig about animal welfare, but because they hate Muslims for whatever reason, and they hitch on that cause as a way of attacking Muslims, they will be Islamophobic. But somebody who loves their dog and does not eat meat or whatever and is genuinely concerned about slaughter methods, that would not be Islamophobic. How on earth do you then define in those grey areas? ...

Wes Streeting: First, context is everything. Secondly, I would challenge you again to point to the definition that would preclude criticism on the grounds that you have described. ...

Q92. **Tim Loughton:** Is it possible to have Islamophobia by one Muslim group against another?

Wes Streeting: No, I think that is sectarianism. That is a really serious and important issue in this country and internationally. It is worthy of deeper consideration. It is worthy potentially of Government action. I also think that there are some very serious claims and experiences made by people who describe themselves as ex-Muslims in terms of how they are treated by others. I think that that is a serious issue, too, but I do not think it falls under this definition per se. ...

Q95. **Chris Green (Conservative):** Mr Streeting, do you agree with your Labour colleague Naz Shah, who said in debate recently, “If it is down to the experiences of women to define feminism, the experiences of people of colour to define racism, the experiences of Jews to define antisemitism, and the experiences of LGBTQ+ communities to define homophobia”, in that sense is it equally relevant or reasonable to say Muslims ought to define Islamophobia?

Wes Streeting: I very strongly agree with that. ... for us the proof of the pudding was in ... how it would be responded to by Muslim communities. The response that we had from over 650 organisations locally and nationally supporting the definition reassured us ...

Q96. **Chris Green:** ... I think that everyone in society ... ought to be similarly concerned about discrimination of all sorts. Therefore, surely, it is not a positive thing in this instance of defining Islamophobia to exclude 95% of the population from making a meaningful contribution.

Wes Streeting: ... It is not about excluding people; ... it is absolutely about elevating the views and considerations of the people who are on the receiving end of a particular form of discrimination about how we define it and how we tackle it. ...

Q99. **Wes Streeting:** ... If people want to go away and produce their own definitions of Islamophobia—as they are perfectly entitled to do in a free society ...

But they will probably do a half-hearted job and will end up in all sorts of muddy territory ... This is the definition. This is the one that we have put forward. It is the one that has been adopted by the Mayor of London, the Mayor of Greater Manchester and local authorities up and down the country. The Scottish Government are looking at it. Every political party in the Scottish Parliament and most of the political parties down here have adopted it or are adopting it.

I really think that the important part of this process is in three stages. One is getting the consultation right. The second thing is getting the support for it among Muslim communities right. The third is making sure this is the standard that is understood and accepted so that we do not end up with the mess that you describe, where people come up with their own definitions of Islamophobia that do cross the line in shutting down legitimate criticism of Islam as a religion. ...

Q101. **Toby Perkins:** ... there are those who believe the vagueness of the terms “Muslimness”, “expressions of Muslimness” and “perceived Muslimness” inevitably mean that people who are using and adopting the definition that you have here will be accused of Islamophobia. ... You said in your analysis that a clear definition of Islamophobia is needed, and we have heard from others who say, “Yes, it is, but this definition is not it.” ...

Q102. Wes Streeting: ... As with the IHRA definition, the examples that go alongside it are absolutely critical for informing our understanding. ... For example, I will just pick one at random: holding Muslims collectively responsible for the actions of any Muslim-majority state, whether secular or constitutionally Islamic. Tim Loughton has already given an example of someone who is a credible academic who has made criticisms of those Muslim-majority states, which are grounded in fact and evidence and I think are actually indisputable as fact. The difference would be if I then pick on my Muslim mate walking down the street and say, “What are you up to in Iran now? What are you going to do about this? I suppose you are supporting your mates in Saudi Arabia, are you? You have just beheaded a load of people, the biggest mass execution in Saudi Arabia’s history”. That would be the distinction. ...

Q103. Wes Streeting: ... Where I think there would be a challenge is if you are applying double standards by requiring of Muslims behaviours that are not expected or demanded of other groups. For example, there is gender segregation at shul. ... There are loads of people, I am sure, on the far right who regularly bombard EHRC with complaints about mosques and gender segregation, I wonder how many have done it about synagogues? Being from the far right—now I have said this, if they are watching, they will probably get some complaints in there—they do not like Jews very much either.

The point is that I do not think there is anything in the definition that precludes that kind of criticism, saying, “I respect this is the teaching of your religion and this is how you practise your faith but I find it uncomfortable for these reasons”. I think it is all about context. If I choose to then insult a whole load of people or abuse them in some way I think that is a different kettle of fish. Merely critiquing, offering a different perspective or a different point of view is part and parcel of living in a liberal democratic society. ...

Dr Khan: ... One of the things I feel quite strongly about is that non-Muslims have not come on board enough to challenge Islamophobia and that part of it is because they have not understood it. They have seen it as a free speech faith issue rather than as a discrimination issue, which is one of the reasons I think pushing the definition that way is advantageous. ...

Q114. Chair: ... Given what the Government have said they now want to do around the definition or appointing the advisers, and given what I think Neil Basu recognised, which is that there is now a problem about further anxiety and concern at the rejection of the definition among Muslim communities across the country, what should the Government do next specifically on the definition in order to rebuild that confidence and to get to a positive outcome? Secondly, what is the best way for us to put discrimination at the heart of this rather than it simply being seen around a hate crime model?

Dr Khan: ... I definitely think they should start by engaging with the APPG. ... They should not be ruling out, by fear, from the outset the idea of racism. I disagree and I think the evidence goes against them but, as I said, there are also good policy and public understanding reasons to use racism as a concept. ... Right now the state is also signalling—by saying Islamophobia is not a form of racism—to Muslims that it does not think that what Muslims think is Islamophobia is racism, and it is signalling to the majority that this is not really a significant problem for all of us. ...

To read the full transcript see

<http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/home-affairs-committee/islamophobia/oral/102491.html>

The APPG report referred to above can be read at

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/599c3d2febbd1a90cffdd8a9/t/5bfd1ea3352f531a6170ceee/1543315109493/Islamophobia+Defined.pdf>

House of Commons Written Answers

Antisemitism

Andrew Rosindell (Conservative) [254765] To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment his Department has made of the reasons why there has been an increase in hate crimes towards the Jewish community.

Heather Wheeler: The Government is determined to confront hate crime wherever it occurs. Police recorded religiously motivated hate crime has increased in recent years despite a backdrop of a longer-term downward trend in the experience of hate crime overall, according to the Crime Survey of England and Wales. We know that there have been trigger events for increases in hate crime, such as the EU Referendum and the terror attacks in 2017, though data shows that these have been temporary. A significant driver for this overall increase is general improvements in police recording, and through our work with the National Police Chiefs' Council and third party services such as the Community Security Trust, police are better at identifying whether a crime is a hate crime and victims may be more willing to come forward.

The Government has a comprehensive plan to tackle hate crime in all its forms, as set out in the refreshed Hate Crime Action Plan published in October 2018, which sets out a programme of work across Government and by the police.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-05-15/254765/>

The Crime Survey referred to above can be read at <http://www.crimesurvey.co.uk/en/SurveyResults.html>

The Action Plan referred to above can be read at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/748175/Hate_crime_refresh_2018_FINAL_WEB.PDF

Teachers: Training

Jim Cunningham (Labour) [256248] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to increase the amount of bursary funding available to people training to be religious education teachers to ensure it is equal to other shortage subjects.

Nick Gibb: The Department has increased bursary funding for religious education courses. In academic year 2019/20, religious education trainees with a 2:2 undergraduate degree or above will receive a £9,000 bursary. Previously a £9,000 bursary was only available to those with a first class degree, while those with a 2:1 degree received £4,000 and there was no funding available for other degree classes. These increases show the Department's continuing commitment to recruiting religious education teachers.

The Department will review bursary funding this summer, prior to announcing the offer for academic year 2020/21 courses in early autumn. This will involve making difficult decisions about where to deploy funding, which will be based on an assessment of current recruitment performance and available budget.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-05-20/256248/>

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<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2017-19/holocaustreturnofculturalobjectsamendment.html>

International Development Assistance (Palestinian National Authority Schools) Bill

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2017-19/internationaldevelopmentassistancepalestiniannationalauthoritieschools.html>

Marriage Act 1949 (Amendment) Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2017-19/marriageact1949amendment.html>

Online Forums Bill

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2017-19/onlineforums.html>

Palestinian Statehood (Recognition) Bill

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2017-19/palestinianstatehoodrecognition.html>

Scottish Parliament

Human Tissue (Authorisation) (Scotland) Bill

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Scottish Human Rights Commission Draft Strategic Plan (closing date 28 June 2019)

<http://www.scottishhumanrights.com/media/1860/strategic-plan-consultation-vfinal-eh.docx>

Online Harms White Paper (closing date 1 July 2019)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/online-harms-white-paper>

Opt-out organ donation: organs and tissues excluded from the new system (closing date 22 July 2019)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/opt-out-organ-donation-organs-and-tissues-excluded-from-the-new-system>

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The Scottish Council of Jewish Communities (SCoJeC) is Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation SC029438