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MEDIA STATEMENT

Muslim Women's Network UK support call for independent inquiry into Islamophobia in the Conservative party.

MWNUK support Muslim Council of Britain (MCB)'s calls for an independent inquiry into Islamophobia in the Conservative party. The recent examples of Islamophobia expressed by Conservative members clearly indicate that there is real cause to be concerned that anti-Muslim prejudice may be a deep-rooted issue within the party.

There is no place for prejudice and discrimination in 2018 and an unwillingness to even investigate its prevalence further legitimises an increase in anti-Muslim hatred across society. Discriminatory attitudes may also be feeding into policies introduced by the government which may unfairly impact Muslims, other minority communities and wider society. A very recent example is the government's hostile policies which have caused thousands among the Windrush generation to lose access to health services, housing and work and to be displaced to the fringes of society.

MWNUK has responded to both the Ministry of Justice's consultation on Domestic Abuse, and DCLG's consultation on Integration, and highlighted the multiplicity of complex issues affecting Muslim women in particular; further hindered by prejudice, austerity, and erroneous definitions of integration. If integration is to be better realised in society then it must be accepted that it is a 'two-way street'; onus must be placed on both marginalised communities and majority society to integrate and not just the former.

Our full response may be found here: [http://www.mwnuk.co.uk/go_files/resources/421281-Integration%20Consultation%20\(DHCLG\).pdf](http://www.mwnuk.co.uk/go_files/resources/421281-Integration%20Consultation%20(DHCLG).pdf)

We were especially disappointed by the lack of public condemnation by senior government officials of the 'Punish a Muslim' day threats despite the extensive fear and distress that was created in Muslim communities. The lack of support and reassurance provided exacerbates our concerns relating to potential anti-Muslim bias.

Vice-Chair Nazmin Akthar-Sheikh stated:

"It simply isn't good enough to state that because you have not experienced or witnessed Islamophobia or anti-semitism, that it is not an issue. Nor is it acceptable to dismiss claims using the old diversion tactic of 'some of my best friends are Muslim'. It is also naïve to assume, without a thorough investigation, that a particular form of prejudice may only be prevalent in one party and not the other. To show true commitment to establishing an open and inclusive society, all parties should carry out internal investigations and stamp out any form of prejudice which may exist, including misogyny. It has been over two years since we raised our concerns over Muslim women being stopped from becoming councillors; what are we waiting for?"

MWNUK extend the MCB's call of the Conservative Party and ask that all political parties carry out independent investigations into any and all instances of racism, sectarianism, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. The prevalence of gender based discrimination must also be investigated.

Vice-Chair Nazmin Akthar-Sheikh added:

"The issue doesn't stop at political parties. All those who purport to stand against discrimination and injustice must do so unequivocally and consistently. All sectors, including charities and NGOs, must take the opportunity to carry out their own internal inquiries and stamp out any forms of bias which may be prevalent, including sectarianism. No organisation should be allowed a free pass when it comes to intolerance."

The anti-Muslim discourses and actions which have developed over the past couple of decades need to be stopped now and the government and every political party needs to lead the way, as these are the institutions which have the legitimate means at their disposal to make sure this happens.

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Muslim Women's Network UK (www.mwnuk.co.uk) is the national leading Muslim women's charity working to improve the social justice and equality for Muslim women and girls