



05 January 2026

## MEDIA STATEMENT

### Shamima Begum – A Victim of Political Expediency

Muslim Women’s Network UK (MWN UK) welcomes the European Court of Human Rights’ scrutiny of the British government’s decision to revoke Shamima Begum’s citizenship. We therefore call on the Home Secretary, Shabana Mahmood, to facilitate the safe return of Shamima Begum to the UK so that the appropriate authorities can determine any legal proceedings in accordance with due process, and ensure that, should the court impose a sentence requiring it, she has access to rehabilitation and support services. The British state cannot continue to evade its responsibilities towards her and render her stateless which is in violation of international laws.

It appears successive governments have weaponised Shamima Begum's case for political gain, prioritising point-scoring over accountability. This approach undermines the very British values of justice, fairness, and due process that politicians frequently invoke yet apply selectively as per convenience. Vague claims of “national security” have repeatedly been used to justify extraordinary measures, without the provision of detailed evidence. That evidence must be subject to independent scrutiny to uphold transparency and the rule of law

MWN UK CEO Baroness Shaista Gohir said: *“Shamima Begum was just 15 years old when she was recruited by ISIS. She was a child victim of grooming, sexual exploitation, and trafficking. As a minor, she could not reasonably have been expected to fully understand the consequences of her actions. The decision to revoke her citizenship failed to meaningfully account for these facts, instead treating her as an adult terrorist rather than a groomed child.*

*Her treatment has also been shaped by a racialised lens of “otherness”, despite the fact that she was born and raised in the UK. Would she have been abandoned abroad had she been a young white British girl groomed into a similar situation? Had that been the case, it is likely her case would have prompted widespread calls for safeguarding, protection, and rehabilitation.”*

Citizenship deprivation under the British Nationality Act 1981 is intended for the most extreme and exceptional cases, particularly where alternatives have been fully considered and robustly tested through judicial scrutiny. In this case, the use of citizenship stripping represents a clear overreach of the law. It exposes systemic bias and sets a dangerous precedent, whereby British citizens with migrant heritage can be rendered effectively disposable—something that would not be possible for an equivalent British citizen without an overseas background. This creates a two-tier system of citizenship and reinforces a racialised framing of Britishness. Crucially, rendering someone stateless is prohibited under international law, and the UK must uphold this obligation.

The precedent set by Shamima Begum’s case risks emboldening future right-wing governments to strip citizenship from those with migrant heritage, even in circumstances where no criminal offence has been committed. True British values demand the consistent application of justice, accountability, and the rule of law—without exception and without discrimination.

*Anyone experiencing any form of violence or abuse can contact the Muslim Women's Network Helpline on 0800 999 5786 or via [info@mwnhelpline.co.uk](mailto:info@mwnhelpline.co.uk)*

**Additional Information**

1. For comments get in touch via – [contact@mwnuk.co.uk](mailto:contact@mwnuk.co.uk) / 0121 236 9000
2. Muslim Women's Network UK (MWNUK) is a registered charity (no.1155092) and further information can be found on <https://www.mwnuk.co.uk>