



30th January 2026
MEDIA STATEMENT

Response to new report on the discrimination and abuse of Muslim women

Muslim Women's Network UK (MWN UK) welcomes the publication of the report by the Women and Equalities Committee today. It lays bare the pervasive abuse, discrimination and harassment faced by Muslim women and girls across the UK, in public spaces, workplaces, schools, healthcare settings and online. It is deeply concerning that Muslim healthcare workers report harassment from both patients and colleagues, and that 10% of anti-Muslim abuse occurs in schools - environments that are meant to be safe spaces.

The findings confirm what Muslim women have been reporting to us for years: anti-Muslim hostility is rising, and Muslim women are disproportionately targeted in ways that are deeply gendered and racialised. The influence of the media and public figures cannot be overlooked. Persistent and harmful stereotypes that depict Muslim women as oppressed, extremist, or inherently 'other' continue to normalise hostility and discrimination. For example, last year, Reform MP Sarah Pochin publicly called for a ban of the burqa, and earlier this month, London mayoral candidate Laila Cunningham (also from the Reform Party), said she would like to see the face veil banned in public spaces and would instruct police to stop and search those who wear it.

The report highlighted that Muslim women also experience abuse from within Muslim communities, including online, further compounding harm and isolation. Women have been sharing with us how they experience judgment and criticism from Muslim men for choices such as wearing make-up, nail polish or jewellery, or for the way they wear their headscarf—attacks that often question their faith and enforce restrictive ideas of "correct" behaviour.

Sebina Hussain, Chair of the Muslim Creators Network, (a project connecting social media influencers established by MWN UK) stated: *"Inadequate action of online abuse directed at Muslim women and girls is exacerbating the marginalisation of an already stigmatised group. The normalisation of such hostility not only perpetuates harm online but also emboldens perpetrators, contributing to increased harassment in offline public spaces."*

Baroness Shaista Gohir, CEO of Muslim Women's Network UK said: *"The freedom-restricting harassment of Muslim women and girls, both the reality of lived experience and the constant fear of it forces many to self-censor, alter their behaviour, and withdraw from public life. This damages individual wellbeing, undermines equality of opportunity, and corrodes community cohesion."*

This report must serve as a catalyst for urgent and coordinated action by the government and should include updating the Hate Crime Action Plan, strengthening legislation, adopting a non-statutory definition of anti-Muslim hostility, regulators holding online platforms and the media accountable; and clear measurable plans for educational settings and the NHS. Muslim Women's Network UK will be raising the issues highlighted in this report with Ministers across government departments.

Note: Anti-Muslim hostility in any setting can be reported to the Muslim Safety Net Helpline on 0303 330 0288 and WhatsApp / Text 07311 876 378 and report online <https://www.muslimsafetynet.org.uk/report>

Additional Information

1. Media enquiries can be directed to: contact@mwruk.co.uk or 0121 2369000
2. Muslim Women's Network UK website: www.mwruk.co.uk
3. Muslim Safety Net Helpline www.muslimsafetynet.org.uk