



**11 April 2024**

## **MEDIA STATEMENT**

### **Inquiry needed on over-representation of minority women in domestic homicide rates**

The Muslim Women's Network UK (MWN UK) is deeply saddened at the tragic death of 27-year-old Kulsuma Akter, who was fatally stabbed in Bradford on Saturday as she pushed her baby in a pram. The arrest of Mr. Habibur Masum, who had previously been charged with assaulting and threatening Ms. Akter and was out on bail, raises serious concerns. This loss of life could have been prevented if Mr. Masum had been detained pending his trial.

The Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) must conduct an urgent investigation into whether Mr. Masum violated his bail conditions before the attack and to scrutinise the actions taken by the West Yorkshire Police and Greater Manchester Police. There may be a potential systemic issue in the handling of domestic abuse cases involving minority ethnic women by police forces nationwide, which could be contributing to the elevated rates of domestic homicide among Black and Asian women. This is supported by evidence from our Muslim Women's Network Helpline where some domestic abuse victims have reported delays and reluctance by police in apprehending perpetrators, often former partners, when they breach bail conditions. Previous research we conducted in 2019, titled "*Muslim Women's Experience of the Criminal Justice System*," also highlighted the failure of the police and crown prosecution service to adequately address the needs of minority women.

MWN UK CEO, Baroness Shaista Gohir OBE said: "*Black and Asian women are over-represented in domestic homicide rates by more than 20%. In January 2024, I asked the Home Office Minister about the figures during House of Lords Oral Questions. Lord Sharpe confirmed that women from minority groups make up 22% of female domestic homicide rates (even though minority communities make up 18% of the population).*" Minority ethnic women are also slightly over-represented in suicides related to domestic abuse according to a recent Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme report. Domestic abuse of women from minoritised communities therefore requires urgent attention.

Given the likely complexity and diversity of factors contributing to these elevated rates, and recognising that police responses represent just one facet, we strongly advocate for the Home Office to initiate an inquiry into domestic abuse affecting minority women. Such an inquiry should comprehensively explore all contributing factors, enabling recommendations spanning government departments and sectors. It is crucial that the intersectional experiences of violence endured by minority women are thoroughly examined to ensure that policies and services effectively cater to their needs.

Muslim Women's Network UK intends to convene a roundtable discussion involving various organisations from the minority ethnic women VAWG sector. We will encourage representatives from both the Home Office and the Shadow Labour Party to participate in this crucial dialogue.

### **Additional Information**

- Media enquiries can be directed to: [contact@mw nuk.co.uk](mailto:contact@mw nuk.co.uk) or 0121 2369000
- Muslim Women's Network UK is a national charity, more info can be found on: [www.mw nuk.co.uk](http://www.mw nuk.co.uk)
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