



6th June 2025

MEDIA STATEMENT

Reform MP Sarah Pochin Uses PMQs to Promote Divisive Anti-Muslim Rhetoric

Muslim Women's Network UK (MWN UK) is deeply troubled by newly elected Reform MP Sarah Pochin's decision to use her first parliamentary question at Prime Minister's Questions (PMQs) (on 4th June 2025) to call for a ban of the burkha. PMQs is a prominent national platform, watched by millions. Rather than using it to represent pressing issues such as the cost-of-living, NHS pressures, or rise in crime levels, she chose to single out and stigmatise Muslim women, making unfounded claims about public safety. Security protocols already exist in sensitive settings (e.g. banks, airports, courts) where face covering may need to be removed temporarily for identification purposes and such situations are managed respectfully and without incident.

The suggestion that the burkha is a threat is a tired and prejudiced trope. Muslim women who choose to wear the burkha or any other form of religious dress, are simply exercising their fundamental rights to freedom of expression and belief. The rhetoric by Sarah Pochin MP undermines social cohesion and further endangers Muslim women, who already experience disproportionate levels of hate crime and discrimination.

MWN UK CEO, Baroness Shaista Gohir, stated:

“Political leaders play a crucial role in shaping societal attitudes, and it is evident that some MPs intentionally use coded language to normalise hostility towards Muslims and appeal to anti-Muslim sentiment. This pattern of anti-Muslim rhetoric has existed for some time and was particularly intensified by certain Conservative MPs during the previous government. This is a frightening time for Muslims — barely a week passes without a public statement reinforcing harmful stereotypes, fuelling fear and hatred, and deepening societal intolerance. Muslim women who wear the headscarf are especially vulnerable and made to feel unsafe.”

MWN UK urges parliamentarians from all political parties to reject divisive rhetoric and commit to policies that address discrimination and strengthen community cohesion.

Additional Information

- Media enquiries can be directed to: contact@mwnuk.co.uk or 0121 2369000
- Muslim Women's Network UK is a national charity: <https://www.mwnuk.co.uk>