

27 March 2016

MEDIA STATEMENT

Murder of Asad Shah - Standing Against Bigotry within Muslim Communities

We at Muslim Women's Network UK (MWNUK) are shocked at the brutal murder of Glasgow shopkeeper, Asad Shah, which was carried out by another Muslim. This murder sadly highlights the rising religious bigotry within our own communities.

Muslim Extremists seek to not only polarise different communities but also try and bring discord within their own communities. Some religious zealots will castigate anyone who does not share their version of Islam. Muslims in Britain are from different ethnic backgrounds and are diverse in their perspectives and practice of Islam. They come from all walks of life, are from different denominations of Islam and are from across the religious spectrum. An individual's belief is his or her own personal concern. No one should be bullied or have to fear for their safety when expressing their views.

MWNUK Chair, Shaista Gohir said: *"The rise in religious sectarianism abroad is starting to have an impact in Britain's Muslim communities. For example, extremists are exploiting these to cause tensions between the minority Shia community and the dominant Sunni groups. Hate speech against the Ahmadiyyah community is also not uncommon. It appears that such hate speech has now spilled over into violence with the murder of Asad Shah who was from this community. Such incitement of hatred is not acceptable and must be robustly challenged. Muslims cannot demand rights for themselves while at the same time displaying bigotry towards other minority groups."*

In recent weeks a few imams in the UK have acted irresponsibly by glorifying the actions of Mumtaz Qadri who murdered Pakistani politician Salman Taseer because he stood up against the persecution of Christians. Instead of hailing this man as a hero and martyr, they should be condemning the murder. This not only promotes intolerance but also sends the wrong message that it is acceptable to take the law into one's own hands and punish Muslims who disagree with your religious beliefs. These faith leaders should also be challenged and organisations that they are associated with should show leadership and take action.

A member of the public has set up a support page for Mr. Shah's family and more than £50000 has been raised so far. You can also make a donation here: <https://www.gofundme.com/supportformrshah> If you or anyone you know is being subjected to hatred, bullying and intimidation, you can call our **helpline** for advice on **0800 999 5786 / 0303 999 5786**. Anyone who fears for their safety should contact the police immediately.

Note to Editors

1. About Us

Muslim Women's Network UK is a national charity that works to improve social justice and equality for Muslim women and girls and operates a national helpline. We find out about their experiences through research and helpline enquiries and produce resources, deliver campaigns and conduct advocacy work, regularly engaging with government.

MWNUK organisational website : www.mwnuk.co.uk

MWN Helpline website : www.mwnhelpline.co.uk

MWN Helpline contact info: 0800 999 5768 / 0303 999 5786 /
info@helpline.co.uk

2. Media Contacts

Media spokespeople from Muslim Women's Network UK are:

Faeza Vaid, MWNUK Executive Director - 07535 703567 /
faeza@mwnuk.co.uk

Shaista Gohir MBE, MWNUK Chair - 07802 225989 / contact@shaistagohir.com

Mussurut Zia, General Secretary - 07967 655063 / mussurut@yahoo.co.uk