

AN INTRODUCTION TO A TEN YEAR EUROPE-WIDE RESEARCH PROJECT

Islamophobia *and* Anti-Muslim Hate Crime: UK CASE STUDIES 2010

Robert Lambert *and*
Jonathan Githens-Mazer



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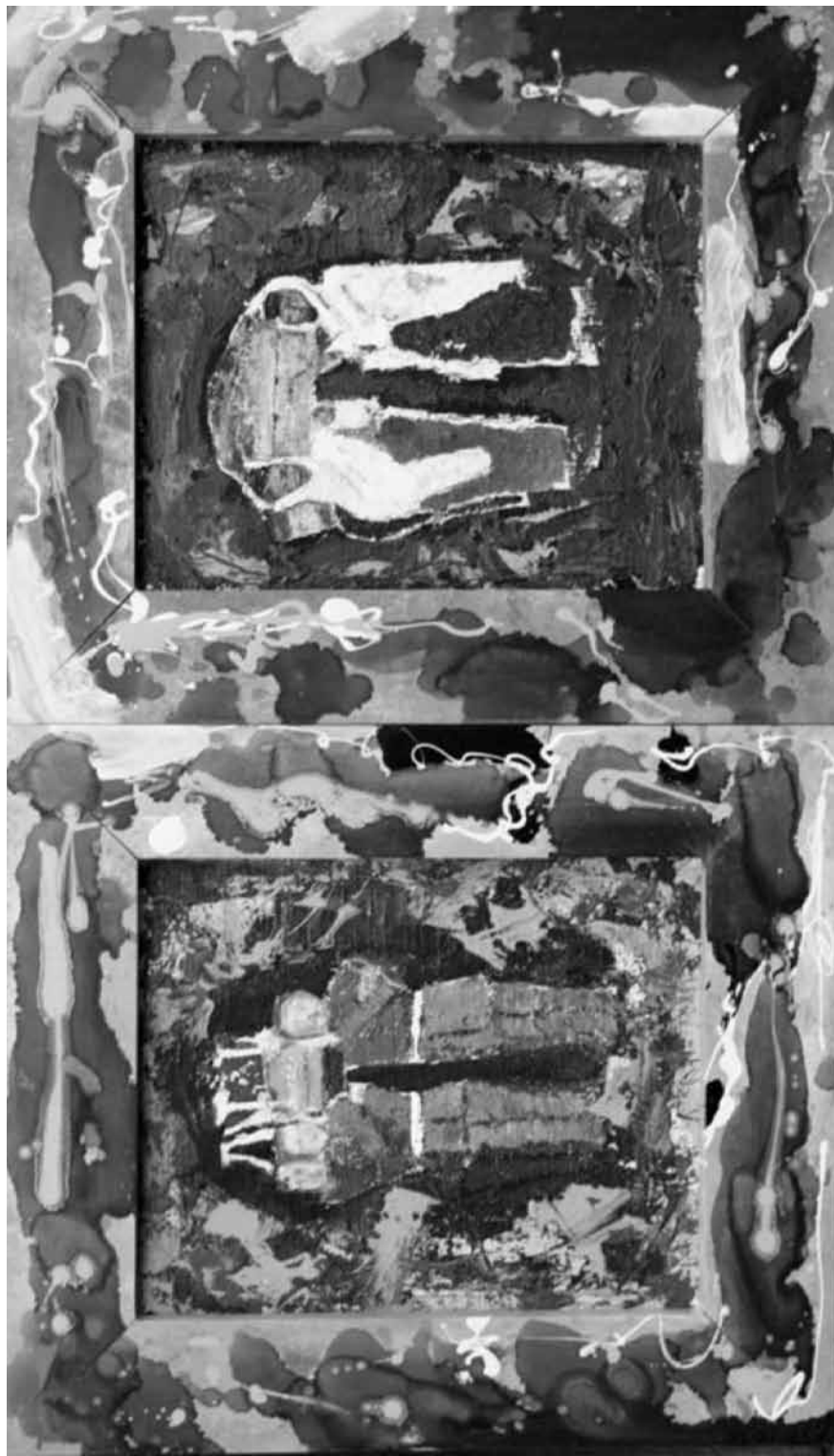
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Left: The Ultimate Sacrifice in the name of God, Queen and Country (Steve Pratt, 2009; acrylic and oil on canvas on board – set into a wood frame, 65cms x 75cms x 3cms)
Right: Collateral Damage (Steve Pratt, 2009; acrylic and oil on canvas on board – set into a wood frame, 65cms x 75cms x 3cms)

Dedication

INSPIRED and humbled by his courage and fortitude we dedicated our first report in 2010 to Yasir Abdelmoultalib, a victim of a life threatening anti-Muslim hate crime in London. We are delighted that Yasir has now joined our advisory board and is able to help guide our research strategy over the next ten years.

In much the same way we have been inspired and humbled by the courage and fortitude of another key advisory board member – Dr Muhammad Abdul Bari. Throughout our research over the last twelve months we have observed the extent to which Dr Bari faces a constant threat of intimidation and violence from opposite ends of a spectrum of political extremism with unfailing equanimity. Thankfully, so far, groups like al-Muhajiroun (and its off-shoots) at one end of the spectrum and the English Defence League (and its allies) at the opposite end have confined their activities to threats, abuse and intimidation – both personal and against the organisations Dr Bari has led with distinction, most notably the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) and the East London Mosque (ELM).

We have been impressed with Dr Bari's calm, phlegmatic and dignified response to regular verbal, written abuse and threats from political extremists who either accuse him of being too liberal or too conservative depending on which end of the political extremism spectrum they represent. In addition, his extremist enemies subject him to a concurrent and unrelenting barrage of false, selective and malicious accusations. Some of the most malicious come from individuals who have switched their attack from one flank to the other. That is to say Ed Husain, Maajid Nawaz and Shiraz Maher, former Hizb ut-Tahrir extremists have transferred their vitriolic campaigns against Dr Bari and his colleagues to their new home in extremist neo-conservative politics. In fairness, their ideological journey has not been so long as to embrace the politics of the British National Party (BNP) and the English Defence League (EDL) but it does mean they now provide ammunition for extremist nationalists to use against Dr Bari and his colleagues.

Dr Bari is not the first advocate of social justice to be attacked by extremists from opposing ideological standpoints. It is no co-incidence that old Labour socialists Tony Benn, Ken Livingstone and Jeremy Corbyn were attacked as 'sell outs' by Frank Furedi, Claire Fox,¹ Brendan O'Neil and Mick Hume when they were leaders of the vanguard Revolutionary Communist Party in the 1980s and then, in contrast, as 'diehard socialists' when the revolutionary communists re-invented themselves as extremist liberals in the 2000s. Unwittingly, Husain, Nawaz and Maher are following the same path as Furedi, Fox, O'Neil and Hume in wearing new ideologies like new coats.

Significantly, in both instances, the switch from a revolutionary ideology in youth to a reactionary ideology in early middle age is advantageous in terms of political influence, personal pecuniary advantage and economic security.² Equally noteworthy, as Dr Bari can testify, a dogmatic and narrowly focused style of argument does not alter whether employed

in the service of Hizb ut Tahrir or Quilliam at opposing ends of the spectrum. Less clear, but equally compelling, is the sense in which in both their youthful and middle aged extremisms Husain, Nawaz and Maher have been unwitting mouthpieces for transnational hierarchies they may not know very well if at all. Far more clear, from Dr Bari's vantage point, is the identical nature of their present and past attacks against him: as both kinds of extremist they object most strongly to Dr Bari's close partnerships with non-Muslim campaigners against UK foreign policy in the Middle East. So, as a victim of their intimidatory and aggressive behaviour, the adverse impact on Dr Bari is much the same whether it comes from his left or right flank.

Seemingly more knowing than Husain, Nawaz and Maher, Furedi protégé, Munira Mirza has moved seamlessly from the Institute of Ideas via Policy Exchange³ to City Hall⁴, the better to challenge and obstruct the work of the East London Mosque and associated Muslim organisations in Tower Hamlets where Dr Bari holds office and influence. Mirza, like Husain, Nawaz and Maher, represents exactly the kind of young 'liberal' Muslim Policy Exchange intend will denigrate and undermine the mainstream community based work Dr Bari stands for.

Just like Benn, Livingstone and Corbyn, Dr Bari has not moved an inch in his commitment to social justice while his arch detractors have undergone role reversals. Indeed, just as extremists like Husain and Fox often mature into reactionary scourges of their younger selves mainstream politicians like Benn, Livingstone, Corbyn and Dr Bari invariably stay true to their political principles throughout their mature years. For public servants charged with monitoring opposing political extremists it often helps to locate that much contested and elusive moderate middle ground by reference to mainstream community activists like Dr Bari, especially when they are simultaneously attacked by fiercely opposed extremists on both flanks.

On Sunday 24 October 2010 we observed as Dr Bari listened with characteristic patience and courtesy to a young person who sought his advice at the annual Global Peace and Unity (GPU) event at the Excel exhibition centre in the London Docklands. At exactly the same time thirty five members and associates of the extremist group al-Muhajiroun⁵ – dogmatic and persistent extremist critics of Dr Bari and the organisations he represents – demonstrated outside the Excel centre against the GPU and sought to persuade young Muslims not to enter it.

The basis of their argument was that the GPU event wrongly promoted everything that Dr Bari holds dear – most notably constructive and equal dialogue between faiths, beliefs, cultures and communities and most especially the full participation of Muslims in UK politics. Had al-Muhajiroun demonstrators ventured inside the GPU exhibition hall their worst fears would have been confirmed by an art exhibition⁶ which included a moving diptych by war artist Steve Pratt in which an equality of suffering was evoked and suggested between Afghani Muslim and British Army victims of the present military conflict in Afghanistan.⁷ Of course, al-Muhajiroun's moral outrage, on precisely this point, would have been echoed by their polar opposites in the EDL had they too ventured into the den of their shared enemy.

Happily, according to our observations and enquiries al-Muhajiroun extremists failed miserably in their ambition and instead as many as 100,000 Muslims attended GPU 2010 over the weekend. While innocent family merriment filled the warm GPU exhibition halls the extremist and peaceful demonstrators were forced to endure both the cold outside and the somewhat vexing and polite attention of young people who were arriving to attend *Britain's Next Top Model* an altogether

different but equally happy kind of event in an adjacent exhibition hall.

Sadly, neo-Conservative extremists⁸ persuaded the Prime Minister that Baroness Warsi, the first Muslim chair of the Conservative Party, should not attend GPU as she had planned to do.⁹ Needless to say David Cameron was more successful in his objective of restricting Muslim attendance at the event than al-Muhajiroun demonstrators.¹⁰ In consequence Baroness Warsi missed the chance to see how harmoniously a major Muslim event shared space with a major fashion event. More significantly, she missed a chance to attend a GPU seminar at which Dr Bari's outstanding contribution to cross-cultural harmony in neighboring Tower Hamlets was endorsed by multi-faith partners including the Reverend Alan Green. And, of course, she missed the opportunity to see for herself how the real extremists stand outside the GPU and the Muslim mainstream represented by Dr Bari and others.

In contrast to the ineffectiveness of al-Muhajiroun demonstrators it is a tribute to the consummate lobbying skills of a transnational neo-conservative elite that a compliant media dutifully reported that Warsi was 'banned' from attending the conference "while [UK Prime Minister] Cameron "decides on [the] best way to tackle Islamic extremism". When we read this explanation in a newspaper while observing the extremist al-Muhajiroun demonstrators outside the Excel centre we were struck forcibly by the power of a lobbying elite that was able to defy logic and the kind of real world evidence we were observing and of the kind we have assembled in this report. At that moment on the steps of the Excel centre a gulf between the experience and evidence of the real world and the tunnel vision of two opposing extremist ideologies seemed to have reached Orwellian proportions.

Two days later we observed the same neo-Conservative extremists laying an ambush for Dr Bari at a seminar at University College London.¹¹ Typically, they presented false, selective and malicious accusations intended to denigrate him and destroy his hard won reputation for integrity and effectiveness in Tower Hamlets and throughout the UK. Suffice to say as always Dr Bari maintained his composure and dignity and responded to extreme provocation and discourtesy with immaculate courtesy and reasonableness.

As this report makes plain, it is impossible to deal effectively with the multi-faceted problem of Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hatred without grasping the nettle of neo-Conservative campaigning against effective, credible, politically-active Muslims like Dr Bari. Long before and ever since 9/11 Dr Bari and his colleagues at the East London Mosque have inspired grass roots community work that provides a role model for others seeking to tackle street crime of all kinds, hate crime of all kinds and anti-social behaviour in all its manifestations. In the present economic climate this should appeal additionally to a government seeking to promote a 'big society' in which effective voluntary work replaces overpayment to organisations like Quilliam that pontificate from the comfort of plush West End offices.

Our own participant research observations of Dr Bari's outstanding voluntary contributions to the civic wellbeing of the poorest neighbourhood in the UK's wealthiest city have been powerfully endorsed by testimony from scores of civic partners including Neil Jameson, director and founder of UK Citizens, the Reverend Alan Green, chair of the Tower Hamlets Interfaith Forum and officers in the Metropolitan Police.

Like Jameson, Green, and his partners in the Metropolitan Police, working at the sharp end in Tower Hamlets inevitably means that Dr Bari has days when his best efforts and of those around him are not always sufficient to prevent or reduce harm. For community practitioners it is axiomatic that the most effective problem solving youth work in the field of crime and community safety entails a high risk of failure alongside success. It is therefore no

coincidence that Dr Bari's most strident critics operate from a bubble-like think-tank world where hands-on experience of problem solving youth work is anathema. Some of those critics paid by the government at the ironically titled 'counter-extremist' think-tank Quilliam might experience a sense of *déjà vu* if they were not so ideologically driven: having attacked Dr Bari's pro-active civic engagement as un-Islamic when they were ineffective Hizb ut-Tahrir ideologues they now attack it as dangerously 'Islamist' in their new role as stooges of highly effective neo-Conservative ideologues.

For his dedication and effectiveness in promoting and facilitating high calibre grass roots work against all kinds of hate crime – in the teeth of a remorseless campaign of well orchestrated denigration – we acknowledge the inspiration we have drawn from his example and dedicate this report to Dr Muhammad Abdul Bari.

Robert Lambert and Jonathan Githens-Mazer

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1. Claire Fox was a leading member of the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP) in the 1980s and 1990s before becoming director of the Institute of Ideas in 2000. http://www.spinprofiles.org/index.php/Claire_Fox. –accessed 4.2.10.
2. Kerbaj, Richard, 2009. Government gives £1m to anti-extremist think-tank Quilliam Foundation. 20 January. <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/politics/article5549138.ece> –accessed 21.10.10; Monboit, George, 2003. Invasion of the entryists. 9 December. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2003/dec/09/highereducation.uk2> –accessed 20.10.10.
3. Mirza, Munira, Senthilkumaran, Abi and Aa'far, Zein, 2007. Living Apart Together: British Muslims and the paradox of multiculturalism, London: Policy Exchange.
4. Mirza is arts and culture advisor to Boris Johnson, Mayor of London.
5. Al Muhajiroun, a UK off-shoot of Hizb ut Tahrir.
6. Al Muhajiroun would brand the art exhibition as *haram*, prohibited in Islam.
7. The artist has kindly allowed the European Muslim Research Centre to display the two paintings The Ultimate Sacrifice in the name of God, Queen and Country (2009: acrylic and oil on canvas on board – set into a wood frame, 65cms x 75cms x 3cms) and Collateral Damage (2009: acrylic and oil on canvas on board – set into a wood frame, 65cms x 75cms x 3cms) at seminars launching this report at community venues in London and Birmingham on 27 and

- 28 November and then subsequently at community venues around the UK. In June 2010 the paintings were featured in the War and Body exhibition in London, supported and funded by City University, from 8 – 13 June 2010.
8. We conceive these extremists as neo-conservative 'Know Nothings', who, like their earlier American mid-19th century namesakes, represent a narrow view on British politics. Membership is limited – by class, by network, by education, by ideological orientation, and mostly by cliquishness. Their nativist orientation defines what they view as unnatural foreign influences on modern Britain – and they alone seek to define membership in the British club – on their terms or no terms at all, and is more than vaguely reminiscent of Lord Tebbit's 'cricket test'. In addition, their strident and cultish ideological orientation places them in direct contradiction to the wider project proposed in Cameron's 'big society' and those values of liberalism and transparency which sit at the core of the Liberal Democrat Party.
9. Townsend, Mark, 2010. 24 October 2010. Baroness Warsi told by David Cameron not to appear at Islamic conference. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/profile/marktownsend> –accessed 27.10.10.
10. Ibid.
11. Harry's Place, 2010. Abdulmutallab: A Debate at UCL. 25 October. <http://hurryupharry.org/2010/10/25/abdulmutallab-a-debate-at-ucl/> –accessed 6.11.10.

“

Nine years later,
on Tuesday 14 September
2010, Blair was in New
York to promote his new
book *A Journey*.

”



Acknowledgements

WE ARE DELIGHTED that Al Jazeera Centre for Studies has sponsored this report. This is an important and exciting development for us, opening a door to partnership work with a distinguished group of media and research experts.

It has been a pleasure and a privilege working with Chris Allen, who has made two outstanding contributions to the report: *Islamophobia: a personal journey, an insightful introduction to the study of Islamophobia* (part 1, section 4) and a West Midlands case study (part 4, sections 22 – 29) which sets the benchmark for excellence in terms of locally focused grass roots research for the EMRC over the next ten years. Allen has unrivalled research experience in this field and has generously shared his skill and expertise with us.

Similarly, we are grateful to Myriam Francois-Cerrah whose *European Muslim Identity* (part 1, section 5) makes an extremely valuable contribution to the report by introducing key themes concerning Muslim identity in Europe with a focus on the seminal work of Tariq Ramadan.

We are also indebted to the author of *Barbarians at the Gates of the City* (part 5, sections 30 – 36) who has asked to remain anonymous on this occasion. He has produced an insightful insider's perspective of Labour Party politics in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, home to the UK's largest local Muslim population.

Fatima Khan's perceptive interviews have done much to highlight the issues of violence, intimidation and discrimination faced by many Muslim women and her Media Portrayal of Muslim Women (part 1, section 6) serves to introduce and contextualise the issue.

We are extremely pleased to have worked in partnership with Naima Bouteldja, Robin Virgin and Fatima Ali of Red Rag Productions and their compelling and original documentary *Short Tales of the Hijab* accompanies and illuminates this report. They have set a high standard for our multi-media research projects in the future. Bouteldja's *Short tales of the hijab* (part 1 section 7) provides background and context to the documentary.

Most crucially the report rests on the skills and commitment of our researchers, Abdul Haqq Baker, Naima Bouteldja, Musa Danquah, Adam Deen, Myriam Francois-Cerrah, Mujib Gallagher, Mujibul Islam, Fatima Khan, Zach Piere and Ruhul Tarafder. We are indebted to them all and look forward to working with them as the project expands.

Editing and transcription of interviews has also been in expert hands and we wish to acknowledge the vital work of Safiya Cohen-Baker, Michelle Martin, Ellen McGlagan and Daniel Smith.

We also extend our sincere appreciation to Robert Mason who has ensured that our research work has been administered smoothly and efficiently throughout.

In addition Abdullah Faliq, Amjad Saleem and Ali Slait at The Cordoba Foundation have provided insight and invaluable logistical support at all times for which we are extremely grateful.

Syed Nuh at RedAspect has provided a superb design service and the outcome of his efforts on our behalf will be apparent when reading this report.

We also wish to thank Naeem Darr, Riza Ramzan, Imran Hamid and their colleagues at the Muslim Directory (MDUK Media) for their expert and professional help in connection with our questionnaire and with other project work.

As always our gratitude goes to Mohamed Ali, Carl Arrindell and all our friends at Islam Channel for their support and guidance. Many other colleagues, friends and acquaintances have helped us and we regret we do not have space to list them all.

Our biggest thanks go to the many individuals who have taken the time to give interviews or complete a questionnaire. With their permission and forbearance we will keep in touch with them during the course of the research project over the next ten years. Their ongoing participation will enrich our cumulative research findings.

We are excited that this research project is growing organically into a multi-agency partnership that stretches across countries, communities, academic disciplines and institutions. That diversity and synergy is reflected in our advisory board. We must therefore thank the original board members – Anas Altikriti, Muhammad Abdul Bari, Rachel Briggs, Tim Dunne, John Esposito, Andy Hull, Basheer Nafi, Tim Niblock and Oliver McTernan – for their support, advice and innovative thinking. Our special thanks go to Tim Dunne who has left the University of Exeter and the EMRC advisory board to take up an important and challenging new post as Research Director of the Asia-Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect together with a professorship at the University of Queensland. We wish him well in his new job and place on record our appreciation for his support and invaluable advice.

Next we wish to thank and welcome new and additional members of the advisory board – Yassir Abdulmouttalib, Ahmad Al Dubuyan, Soumaya Ghannouchi, Fatima Khan and Tim Parsons.

Finally we wish to thank our funders and fundraisers, the trustees and directors of Islam Expo and The Cordoba Foundation. Without their generous support and encouragement the European Muslim Research Centre would not have been able to embark on this ambitious research programme. Thanks to their tireless support we have every reason to be confident about a secure research environment in which to develop and complete this long-term research project during this new decade.

Robert Lambert and Jonathan Githens-Mazer

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Preface

A different journey

THIS IS AN INTRODUCTORY report that has a prime research focus on the experience of Muslims as victims of violence, intimidation and discrimination in the UK. As such it serves as a template for our ongoing research in the UK and also our forthcoming research across Europe on the same topic. At the same time the report offers academic and general readers an immediate insight into the grim reality of a lived experience that is insufficiently acknowledged and understood outside of the communities where it occurs. Such a widespread lack of recognition of the problem of anti-Muslim violence, intimidation and discrimination in the UK strikes us as all the more remarkable at a time when mainstream media in the UK has been rather more forthcoming in its coverage of identical anti-Muslim violence, intimidation and discrimination in the US arising from the furore over the so called Ground Zero Mosque.¹²

That many of the attacks on UK mosques and UK Muslims originate in much the same analysis of 9/11 as the bigotry and violence that has engulfed the US in the run up to the ninth anniversary of the al-Qaeda terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre in New York¹³ is noteworthy. We argue in this report that much anti-Muslim violence in the UK is predicated on the rhetoric and practice of the “war on terror”¹⁴ that George Bush and Tony Blair launched “shoulder to shoulder” against “an evil ideology” in the aftermath of 9/11.¹⁵ Nine years later, on Tuesday 14 September 2010, Blair was in New York to promote his new book *A Journey*.¹⁶ Neither in the book itself nor in this or other media engagements to promote it has the former UK Prime Minister vouchsafed any recognition that he might bear some responsibility for anti-Muslim bigotry and violence since 9/11.¹⁷ In fairness – so far as we can establish – not one interviewer in the UK or the US has put the question to him. We therefore invite journalists and politicians as well as academics and activists to read this report so as to gain an insight into the uncomfortable and largely unrecorded journey many Muslims in the UK have travelled in the UK since the “war on terror” was launched.

What incident have we encountered in our research that best encapsulates this hidden experience? There are many harrowing accounts to choose from but we have selected a mundane incident in which a petrified infant daughter watched her mother being punched and abused while returning home on a bus from a shopping centre.¹⁸ Afterwards the daughter asked her mother why a stranger had hit her. Instead of trying to explain to her daughter why an unknown assailant wanted to abuse and assault her because she was a Muslim woman wearing a burka¹⁹ and niqab²⁰ the mother tried to play the incident down and minimise the pain and distress she was suffering so as to reduce her daughter’s anxiety.²¹

The mother may not have succeeded: her daughter was deeply troubled and left with a vivid and clear recollection of her mother being struck violently by a large, angry and abusive adult male.²² Neither did the daughter have any positive recollection of her mother receiving help or support from fellow passengers or the bus driver.²³ Instead the daughter witnessed

the kind of assault that has become commonplace in parts of the UK: a violent attack on a Muslim woman wearing a niqab, burka or hijab²⁴ in a public place. This particular incident is also typical and illustrative of a widespread hidden experience for three other reasons: firstly, the victim did not report the assault to police and did not discuss it outside of a close circle of family and friends; secondly, after the assault the victim reduced her travel by foot and by public transport to a minimum; and thirdly, neither the victim, nor her family or friends had any inclination to address the causes of the attack but chose instead to retreat into the safety of a small network of trusted Muslim friends.²⁵

This last feature – refuge and retreat – has in many instances been fostered by a state of denial prevalent in many Muslim communities where the varied experiences of regular anti-Muslim bigotry has led to inhibited and insular behaviour aimed at reducing the risk of attack, abuse and discrimination. Thus, many Muslims who wear distinctive Islamic clothes have altered their behaviour in a number of ways. Some, like the woman in the exemplary case, restrict their public travel to a minimum; others discard their Islamic clothes and wear Western clothes in some or all public places; many deny the existence or prevalence of Islamophobia and anti-Muslim bigotry (no less when they have been victims of it) and concentrate instead on reducing or concealing their adherence to Islam in the hope that this will reduce the risk of attack, intimidation, discrimination or disapprobation. This last characteristic was illustrated on several occasions during our research when visible or recorded instances of anti-Muslim hate crime was implausibly denied or demonstrably neglected by Muslim interviewees who had direct knowledge of it.²⁶ Although it does not appear to be widespread we have encountered a significant number of cases where Muslim men who have experienced violence, intimidation or discrimination or have become fearful of it have shaven their beards off and adopted outwardly non-Muslim lifestyles. In much the same way a number of Muslim women have reluctantly removed their hijabs, burkas or niqabs in particular public places so as to reduce the risk of violence, intimidation or abuse.²⁷

Wilfully burying their heads in the sand is often supposed to be the behaviour of community elders and first generation Muslim immigrants that best exemplifies this negative reflex response to active anti-Muslim sentiment. While accurate, in truth, it is a response that is probably far more widespread, not simply a response by passive, tolerant and acquiescing elders. What can be said with more certainty is that it is the kind of response that evokes frustration from Muslim community activist groups that seek to foster greater civic engagement and political activism so as to confront and tackle Islamophobia.

In fact, victims of violent bigotry can respond in a variety of ways. There are, however, two polar opposite characteristics at each end of a spectrum of potential responses – passivity and resistance. Having illustrated passivity it may be helpful to describe resistance.

When racist thugs threw a brick through the window of a house in a Medway town in Kent it nearly struck the mother of a hard working Muslim family from Bangladesh. Luckily it just missed her head and she was not injured, just badly shaken physically and emotionally. Her teenage son was so incensed that very soon after he threw a brick through the window of the home belonging to a local racist thug who he reasonably suspected of carrying out the attack. That response took place in the late 1980s and serves to mark a turning point in what had become a widespread phenomenon in the UK since the late 1960s – violent racism or ‘Paki bashing’ as both perpetrators and victims understood it.²⁸ For two decades ‘Paki-bashers’ had come to perceive their victims as docile and passive, unable or unwilling to fight back. The change was led by teenage sons like the one described who had grown up with neighbourhood

and classroom racism in UK towns and schools and had grown frustrated by their parents' unreasonable passivity and forbearance.

Nowhere is that change from passive victimhood to active resistance more pronounced than in Tower Hamlets in the East End of London where the National Front and allied racist thugs were eventually forced to abandon their violent intimidation of a burgeoning Muslim Bangladeshi community in the mid 1990s.²⁹ The stoic resignation and forbearance of immigrant parents was gradually replaced by the active resolve and resistance of a second generation born and brought up in the UK.³⁰ Not all active resistance to violent racism in the East End and around the UK was as violent as that meted out by racist attackers but some of it was.³¹ In that respect community resistance resembled an earlier local model provided by Jewish community activists who fought violent anti-Semites on the same streets for the same reason.³²

Significantly, in both instances, the two immigrant communities in the East End of London were not always sure that politicians and police were sufficiently supportive so as to allow them to rely solely on legal responses to the daily violence and intimidation they faced.³³ To a large extent both minority communities felt compelled to respond directly and violently towards their attackers because of a failure by politicians and police to protect and support them.³⁴ Notably, in both cases influential sections of the national and local media did little to highlight the violence against minority immigrant communities and much to exacerbate it.³⁵ Suffice to say there have been many instances since 9/11 when sections of the media have fanned the flames of anti-Muslim sentiment³⁶ with little apparent regard for history that shows how readily racist comment or bigotry can foster a climate in which racist violence or violence against vulnerable minorities gains licence and tacit approval.³⁷

A lack of confidence in political and police support against racist violence has also been evident in other immigrant communities around the UK, perhaps most notably amongst black communities with family roots in the Caribbean. Eventually in 1999 politicians and police responded positively and pro-actively to the issue, largely as a result of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry.³⁸ In addition to providing a clear imperative to protect and support victims of racist violence it followed logically out of Lord Scarman's famous findings that victims of racist violence would be less likely to take the law into their own hands if they received fair and equitable treatment from the police and the criminal justice system.³⁹ Notwithstanding major improvements in the support offered to victims of racist violence in the new millennium a number of cases documented by the Institute of Race Relations⁴⁰ serve to caution against complacency and the erroneous notion that racism and racist violence are things of the past.⁴¹

To the contrary, minority ethnic communities continue to face the threat of racism and racist hate crimes in many towns and cities in the UK.⁴² Moreover, as a direct development of racism and racist violence, anti-Muslim bigotry and anti-Muslim violence has become as serious a problem in the new millennium as 'Paki-bashing' ever was in the last four decades of twentieth century Britain. One of the most telling aspects of our research is the discovery that thousands of UK citizens who, because of their ethnicity, faced daily threats of racist violence and intimidation in the last century now face a repeat of the same violent threat because of their visible attachment to Islam. Belatedly, and largely due to the pressure of grass roots campaigners including Doreen and Neville Lawrence,⁴³ the first threat belatedly began to be taken seriously just as the second threat emerged.

Ajmal⁴⁴ is just one of a number of Muslims we have interviewed in the last twelve months who has been a victim of serious racist violence – 'Paki-bashing' – in the 1980s and a victim

of violent anti-Muslim hate crime in the last decade. In the twenty years that separated the two serious assaults carried out against him he helped tackle violent racism in his local community and felt much satisfaction and relief that his children would not have to face the daily violence and intimidation that he and his friends endured growing up with National Front supporters for neighbours and classmates at school.⁴⁵ That relief, he says in interview, was relatively short lived. While he felt confident that large, established Muslim communities in the UK were now much safer than their fledgling counterparts had been in the last millennium he was equally concerned that smaller Muslim communities were extremely vulnerable to violence and intimidation in 2010, especially in towns where British National Party (BNP), English Defence League (EDL) and other anti-Muslim influence was present and tangible.

Without doubt the clearest and most pivotal finding to emerge from our research to date is that the threat of violence that emerged for the second time in Ajmal's life was triggered in the aftermath of 9/11. That the threat remains extant on the ninth anniversary of 9/11 is a sad indictment of the apathy and antipathy a significant minority of politicians and media commentators have demonstrated towards its victims. That we should therefore interrogate political responses to 9/11 in the UK in an effort to comprehend how a New Labour government so passionately committed to the eradication of racism and racist violence might simultaneously licence Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hatred is therefore essential and sits at the heart of our research project.

In fact our research interest in political responses to 9/11 is galvanised by two major news stories that coincide with the ninth anniversary of 9/11 and the preparation of this report: a furore over the so-called *Ground Zero Mosque* in New York⁴⁶ and mixed reactions to the publication of Tony Blair's political autobiography *A Journey*⁴⁷ in London – causing more problems for Blair's security advisors in London than the book launch in New York described above.⁴⁸ The former UK Prime Minister is typically articulate and clear about the speed with which he conceived a response to the attack on the World Trade Centre as "...a fundamental struggle for the mind, heart and soul of Islam".⁴⁹ Such is the extent to which anti-Muslim sentiment originates in the language of the war on terror that it is worth quoting from *A Journey* on the overriding need "to see the battle as existential and to see it through":

*...to take the time, to spend the treasure, to shed the blood, believing that not to do so is only to postpone the day of reckoning, when the expenditure of time, treasure and blood will be so much greater.*⁵⁰

Whether we turn to the anti-Muslim propaganda of the BNP, EDL or United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) we find clear evidence of the influence of Blair's interpretation of the war on terror where al-Qaeda is described as being at one end of a continuum of problematic Muslims.⁵¹ Next on Blair's spectrum are Muslims who share al-Qaeda's "goal of an Islamic state, a rebirth of the caliphate" closely followed by many more who "condemn the terrorists, but in a curious and dangerous way buy into bits of their world view" According to Blair:

*They agree with the extremists that the US is anti-Islam; they see the invasions of Afghanistan or Iraq as invasions of Muslim nations because they were Muslim nations. They see Israel as the symbol of Western anti-Islamic prejudice. This group stretches uncomfortably far into the middle of the spectrum. Then you have, of course, a large number, probably the majority, who condemn the terrorists and their world view.⁵² But even this group have not yet found their way to articulating a thoroughly reformed and modernising view of Islam.*⁵³

Even allowing for Blair's misleading analysis of the terrorist threat itself this is an account

that stigmatises so many innocent and law abiding Muslims in the UK (as elsewhere) who share the same view as many of their non-Muslim neighbours – that the war on terror has been as ineffective and morally reprehensible as the al-Qaeda terrorism it purports to tackle. He might not wish to acknowledge it but some of the staunchest defenders of Blair's analysis and ensuing actions can be found in the BNP and the EDL. It was fitting therefore that leading EDL activists should travel to New York at the same time as Blair to take part in the ninth anniversary demonstration against Park51, the so-called *Ground Zero Mosque*.⁵⁴ Having denied entry to the writer and performer of Peace Train because of homeland security constraints imposed by the war on terror (see this report, *Born in the USA*, part 1, section 2), US Border control officials felt sanguine about granting entry to Dutch politician Gert Wilders so that he could give an anti-Muslim speech at the 9/11 anniversary rally in New York.⁵⁵ Only fear of terrorist reprisals against US troops appeared to persuade Terry Jones, a Florida pastor not to burn Qur'ans outside his church in Gainesville, USA to mark the same occasion.⁵⁶

Against this anti-Muslim backdrop the Guardian's Paul Harris travelled to Brooklyn to ascertain the impact on local Muslim communities. While not as large or ethnically diverse as London's Muslim populations, Harris nevertheless finds similarities in their poor socio-economic status:

*In New York, the Muslim community is at least 600,000 strong, including black Americans, immigrants from West Africa, Pakistan and Asia – Malaysians, Indonesians, Kazakhs, Turks and Palestinians. There are areas in downtown Brooklyn and Manhattan that have been home to Syrian and Lebanese Muslims for more than 100 years. Yet now this particular ingredient in New York's famous melting pot feels that it is under attack.*⁵⁷

What Harris found bears a notable similarity to experiences we are chronicling in the UK. Mohammad al-Naqeb, a 35-year-old Yemeni immigrant who had lived ten years in America, told Harris 'he had never before felt like such an outsider in his adopted country':

Standing in an electronics store in the Brooklyn suburb of Bay Ridge, Naqeb said he was worried for his own safety and that of his children. "I feel scared. Everybody feels scared. For the future of my children and grandchildren, I think they should move it."

Like so many Muslim counterparts in the UK Naqeb feels persuaded to retreat and accept defeat in the face of such anti-Muslim hostility:

*For Naqeb, who works as a newspaper sales rep, the solution is for New York's Muslim community to accept that the Park51 project – the official name of the planned Islamic centre – must be elsewhere. Even though Naqeb believes it is unfair and prejudiced that his religious community should be singled out for such treatment, he thinks it is for the best. It is a piece of classic immigrant thinking: get your head down, keep quiet, ignore the insults and they will not send you back. "They should move it. For my family's sake. I want them to have a future here in this country," he repeated.*⁵⁸

Similarities too in terms of an overlap between mainstream and extremist politics and ensuing violence against mosques and Muslims:

*Newt Gingrich, a leading conservative Republican, has compared Muslims to Nazis. The threat to burn Qur'ans in Florida is just the most extreme of growing anti-Muslim sentiment. Other extremist pastors, in Kansas, Wyoming and Tennessee, have now come up with similar plans. Across the US have come reports of attacks on Muslim targets and the FBI is investigating crimes in four different states that range from windows being smashed at an Islamic centre in California to a fire being set at one in Texas. In New York a man is being prosecuted on a charge of trying to stab to death a Muslim taxi driver.*⁵⁹

Just as we have found UK born Muslims to be far more willing to stand up against anti-

Muslim intimidation so too in New York:

"In Bay Ridge, it feels fine," said Linda Sarsour, a native Muslim Brooklynite whose parents came originally from Palestine. "But once we leave the neighbourhood, that is when people feel afraid." In Bay Ridge there is safety in numbers for Muslims, Sarsour says, but she is shocked that suddenly her idea of her home city has become so narrow. After all, she was born and raised in Brooklyn. But now, according to a recent poll, some 63% of her fellow New Yorkers think that Park51 should not be built. She does not hide her feelings about it. "I feel betrayed and disappointed. I almost feel like I don't know anyone any more in this city. Do people look at me as a New Yorker? I am having an identity crisis. Do I have to prove myself to them?" she said.⁶⁰

Similarly, Mohammad Abdullah offers Harris a defiant response:

This is my country. This is the United States of America. It is legal, it is lawful and they should build it [Park51] right where they want to build it... Islam is not foreign to this country ...There is nothing un-Islamic about this country. We share the same sense of moral appropriateness and justice.⁶¹

In the circumstances New York Muslims will be delighted to be standing shoulder to shoulder with native New Yorker, Professor John Esposito, who has been unstinting in his efforts to bring decency and justice to bear upon the Park51 controversy and to dealings with US Muslims generally. He told Harris that Americans "say things about Muslims and Islam that they couldn't get away with saying about Jews or African Americans or Italian Americans:"

It is up to American society to change, not Muslims, Esposito said. However, Esposito said he has some hope that the furor over the Islamic center and the threatened Koran-burning might prove to be a turning point. "I think we can learn from what happened," he said, "and now is a time for leaders in our society at all levels ... to reach out, and for Muslims in our society to take advantage of the situation, as it were, to reach out to the wider society."⁶²

That is the positive note we are adopting in the UK too. We have every reason to believe that the decency of the overwhelming majority of ordinary UK citizens will eventually undermine and reduce the bigotry of a vocal minority. If brave political leadership is forthcoming then the task will be so much easier. Our journey throughout the second decade following 9/11 will be to monitor and analyse that political struggle in the towns and cities of the UK and across Europe. While journeying we will take inspiration and guidance from John Esposito and his outstanding work in the US.

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13. Harris, Paul, 2010. 9/11 anniversary: New York Muslims insist that they are American too. Observer. 12 September. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/sep/12/911-anniversary-new-york-muslims> – accessed 14.9.10.
14. We have used inverted commas to denote the popular title given to the “war on terror”, a wide ranging military led response to 9/11, but will omit them in subsequent references.
15. Blair, Tony, 2010. *A Journey*. London: Random House, pp. 341–370.
16. Ibid.
17. Freeman, Hadley, 2010. Tony Blair interviewed by Katie Couric. Guardian. 15 September. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/blog/2010/sep/15/tony-blair-katie-couric> – accessed 15.9.10.
18. EMRC 16/10.
19. Burka or chador – a full length garment covering a woman from head to foot, generally black.
20. Niqab – a face veil.
21. EMRC 10/10.
22. EMRC 10/10.
23. EMRC 10/10.
24. Hijab – a headscarf.
25. EMRC 10/10.
26. See for example EMRC 48/10.
27. Ibid.
28. See for example Pearson, Geoff, 1976. ‘Paki-Bashing’ in a North East Lancashire Cotton Town: A case study and its history. In G. Mungham and G. Pearson, eds., *Working Class Youth Culture* London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
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32. Catterall, Peter, 1994. The Battle of Cable Street. *Contemporary British History*. 8 (1), pp. 105 – 132.
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36. Ibid.
37. See for example, Poole, Elizabeth, 2006. The Effects of September 11 and the War in Iraq on British Newspaper Coverage. In: Poole, Elizabeth and John E. Richardson, eds., *Muslims and the News Media*. London: I.B. Taurus, pp. 96–97.
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46. Ibid.
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54. Ibid. p. 348.
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In many countries government policies designed to control the Muslim community, to “domesticate” Islam, have put pressure on Muslims not simply to integrate into a multicultural society but to assimilate by abandoning elements of their Muslim belief and culture in order to enjoy full participation in their new country.

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Foreword

POST 9/11, 7/7 and other terrorist attacks and arrests of suspected terrorists in America and across Europe, there has been an exponential increase in Islamophobic rhetoric and agendas, including calls to ban the Qur'an, monitor or close mosques, deport Muslim citizens and halt immigration from Muslim countries. Leaders of right-wing nationalist, anti-immigrant political parties, political and media commentators, and hard-line Christian Zionist religious leaders regularly employ hate speech and dangerous invective aimed not just at extremists but at Islam and Muslims in general, thus conflating mainstream Islam and Muslims with terrorism. The result has been the growth of Islamophobia, a widespread suspicion of mainstream Muslims and discrimination towards Muslims based on their religion or race, that has led to hate crimes and other acts of violence.

The war on terror has raised difficult questions and choices for European and American Muslims. In many countries government policies designed to control the Muslim community, to “domesticate” Islam, have put pressure on Muslims not simply to integrate into a multicultural society but to assimilate by abandoning elements of their Muslim belief and culture in order to enjoy full participation in their new country. Changing political and legal environments in Western countries threaten and undermine Muslims’ acceptance by others, their quality of life, and their security. Many face workplace discrimination, racial and religious profiling, and overzealous security measures. The situation has become especially difficult for Islamic institutions: mosques, Islamic charities, and NGOs that face harassment, unwarranted scrutiny, and indictment without prompt adjudication.

At the heart of the debate has been a tendency to see Islam as a foreign religion, placing it over and against Europe’s secular and the Judeo-Christian traditions. France’s banning of the hijab in schools is seen as an outgrowth of an assimilation policy. After the 7/7 attacks in London, Britain, long an advocate of integration and multiculturalism has followed many other European countries. This approach is embodied in phrases like “British values” (or French or German or Danish or Dutch) that recall Europe’s white pre-immigration period and privilege “enlightened” Western secular (some would also add Christian) values. The majority of Muslims in Germany, approximately 80 percent or 3.5 million Muslims, have no German citizenship and are therefore excluded from the right to vote and actively participate in the political sphere—the basis of real integration into German society.

The government also introduced what some have described as a “loyalty test,” required only for Muslims seeking German citizenship, on their attitudes toward Western clothing for women, whether parents should allow their children to participate in school sports, homosexuality, and whether husbands should be allowed to beat their wives. The state interior ministry said the test would be used to filter out Muslims who were unsuited for life in Germany. At the same time, many Muslims and others have argued that Muslims should be allowed to develop a distinct European Muslim identity that blends established European

principles and values with Muslim faith and values.

The situation is not getting better. The surprising gains made by Geert Wilders' Freedom Party, the Danish People's Party, the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ), Hungarian Jobbik, and the British National Party in 2009 European Parliament elections emboldened many of its leaders to applaud the Swiss vote to ban minarets. Geert Wilders, who previously warned that mass deportation of millions of Muslims from Europe may be necessary, called for similar votes and policies to stem the tide of so-called "Islamization" in Europe.

In America, the protests and debate over Park51 (an Islamic center), popularly though incorrectly known as the Ground Zero Mosque, unleashed a tidal wave of anti-Islam and anti-Muslim sentiment and protests across the United States, revealing the tip of the iceberg of a social cancer that had gone unnoticed or denied. Especially troubling is the fact that opponents and protesters were not simply uneducated or marginalized bigots, neo-con media and political commentators, and hard-line Christian pastors, but American politicians who belonged to mainstream political parties (aspiring presidential candidates, members of Congress and other political candidates).

Too often overlooked in the fog of this culture war is the fact that majorities of Muslim in America and Europe desire and are in fact integrated into their societies. The realities of globalization and immigration, and the influx of new nationalities and ethnic, and religious groups in America and Europe, challenge accepted notions of cultural pluralism in Western countries long accustomed to think of themselves as Judeo-Christian or secular. Will our understanding of pluralism be broadened to accept the new "others," to appreciate their similarities and common interests and to respect their differences? While immigrants are challenged to accept primary responsibility for making their own way, new homelands are equally challenged to provide the institutional structures and the educational and employment opportunities that immigrants need to advance and become part of the dominant culture.

Like other immigrants before them, Muslims in the West are looking for a level playing field, to have the same rights and duties and to be judged in the same way as their fellow citizens. No longer predominantly first generation immigrants, many are second and third generation citizens. Despite the acts and continued threat from a very small but dangerous minority of extremists, the majority of Muslims like their non-Muslim fellow citizens, are loyal citizens. A major Gallup study of interfaith relations in Britain, France and Germany (Gallup Coexist Index 2009: A Global Study of Interfaith Relations) reflects what some might find a surprising level of integration. Gallup found that Muslims are more likely than the general populations in Britain, France and Germany to identify strongly with their faith, they are also as likely (if not more likely) than the general public to identify strongly with their countries of residence.

While majorities in France, Germany, and the United Kingdom either did not think Muslims in their respective countries were loyal to their countries of residence or unsure, strong majorities of European Muslims surveyed thought Muslims were loyal to their respective countries of residence in Europe. Moreover, when asked how justifiable acts of violence were (like those of 7/7 and the Madrid bombings) a majority of Muslims in all three countries (82% in France, 91% in Germany, and 89% in Britain) said that violence was not justifiable at all. Gallup found that people claiming that religion was important were likely to also say that violence could not be justified for a noble cause. Clear common grounds were reflected in all three countries where the public and Muslims thought that national language acquisition, employment, and educations would best help integration into these countries.

As this important study by Robert Lambert and Jonathan Githens-Mazer, *Islamophobia and Anti-Muslim Hate Crime: UK Case Studies* documents, a biased minority in the United Kingdom (and one can say the same for much of Europe and America) persistently refuses to face a 21st century reality: Islam is now a European and American religion. Muslims are part of the mosaic of Western nations; like people of all faiths and no faith, they are entitled to the same rights, duties, opportunities and civil liberties.

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City of
Manchester



ENGLISH
DEFENCE
LEAGUE

IT'S NOT
RACIST
TO OPPOSE
MUSLIM
EXTREMISTS!

Summary of Research Findings

This summary divides our preliminary research findings into three categories: anti-Muslim hate crime; Islamophobia and discrimination; and responses and recommendations. We will produce full research findings in 2011 and beyond as we develop our research on this topic throughout the decade.

ANTI-MUSLIM HATE CRIME

The major part of our report introduces research findings in relation to intimidation and violence experienced by members of Muslim communities in the UK. It is based on over twelve months close engagement with Muslim communities in the UK by a small team of researchers. In addition some of the researchers have been engaged with the issue during the preceding decade.

The most significant findings derive from victims' first-hand accounts of violent crimes committed against mosques, Islamic centres and Muslim organisations; against Muslim women wearing hijabs, niqabs or burkas; and against Muslim men wearing distinctive Islamic clothes, in each instance offering compelling evidence of the existence of anti-Muslim hate crimes.

Muslims in the UK face a specific threat of violence and intimidation from: politically motivated attackers, and from gangs and individuals who are not aligned to extremist nationalism.

Terrorism and Political Violence against Muslims

Firstly a small violent extremist nationalist milieu that has broadly the same political analysis as the British National Party (BNP), the English Defence League (EDL). EDL and BNP influence is significant but so is the influence of mainstream political commentators poses a threat of political violence. We therefore investigate a category of recent extremist nationalist criminal convictions that warrant the description of political violence (and often its sub-category, terrorism).

Hate crimes committed by gangs and individuals

The majority of anti-Muslim hate crimes in the UK do not appear to be committed by members or supporters of the English Defence League (EDL), British National Party (BNP) or their sister organisations and do not readily qualify as political violence for that reason. In London and other parts of the UK gangs and individuals who have no allegiance with or affinity to the BNP, EDL or the violent extremist nationalist milieu that surrounds those parties commit hate crimes against Muslims, Islamic institutions, Muslim organisations

and mosques. Individuals who have become convinced and angry by negative portrayals of Muslims in the media most especially of Muslims as terrorists and security threats provide the main category of assailant.

Racist and random attacks

In addition the vast majority of Muslims in the UK face additional threats of violence from violent racists and threats of random street violence that impact most severely on poor urban communities where most Muslims live.

Social impact of intimidation and violence

Intimidation and violence against Muslims is carried out by a minority of UK citizens to such an extent that it risks undermining and overshadowing the decent and responsible behaviour of the vast majority.

Increased anti-Muslim intimidation and violence since 9/11

Since 9/11 Muslims in the UK have faced increased intimidation and violence because their faith or political activism has often been maliciously and falsely conflated with terrorism, extremism and subversion.

Plausible links between anti-Muslim hate crimes and media discourse

Assailants of Muslims are often motivated by a negative view of Muslims they have acquired from reports and commentaries in the media.

Hate-crimes against mosques

Since 9/11, arson, criminal damage, violence and intimidation against mosques, Islamic institutions and Muslim organisations has increased dramatically. Many mosques in isolated Muslim communities have become particularly vulnerable.

Hate crimes against Muslim women

Our research reveals a disturbing number of hate crimes in which Muslim women wearing hijabs, niqabs or burkas have been assaulted, abused and intimidated. These incidents have taken place in public places – streets, shopping centres, on trains and on buses – invariably in view of passers-by and onlookers who have generally not intervened to help or defend the victims.

Muslim victims of street violence

On UK streets violent attacks on Muslims are often demonstrably anti-Muslim in terms of motivation while sometimes racist, sometimes anti-immigrant and occasionally purely random. In consequence many Muslims face a greater cumulative threat of street violence than members of other minority communities and other fellow citizens.

Intimidation by the English Defence League

During the last two years there has been a dramatic rise in anti-Muslim demonstrations in Muslim communities by the EDL and sister organisations. These angry and often violent demonstrations increase fear and anxiety in Muslim communities.

Victims of ‘Paki-bashing’ are now victims of ‘Muslim-bashing’

Many Asian and other minority ethnic Muslim families suffered racist violence and abuse in the UK in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s and were cautiously optimistic that the problem was beginning to draw to a close at the dawn of the new millennium. After a brief respite that optimism has evaporated. Having endured National Front (NF) inspired racist violence for decades they now face threats from British National Party (BNP) and English Defence League (EDL) inspired anti-Muslim violence.

Serious under-reporting of anti-Muslim hate crimes

Many victims of anti-Muslim hate crime and Muslim victims of crime more generally do not report the incidents to police. Fear, suspicion and alienation are among a complex set of reasons for this situation.

Insufficient data to establish scale of anti-Muslim hate crimes

Under-reporting by victims is one factor in a failure to establish the precise scale of the problem. Inadequate police procedures concerning anti-Muslim hate crimes is another important factor. An investigative focus on racist or anti-religious motivation often obscures a more straight forward anti-Muslim motivation.

Anti-Muslim hate crimes against isolated Muslim communities

Mosques and Muslims in relatively isolated and small Muslim communities are often at increased risk of anti-Muslim violence and abuse. Police support in some cases is inadequate to ensure the safety of mosques and worshippers.

Hate crimes against identifiable Muslims

Perpetrators of anti-Muslim hate crimes often show a sufficient level of awareness about the identities of their intended targets so as to carry out their attacks effectively. Hence attacks often take place in the vicinity of a mosque or against Muslims wearing Islamic clothes and, in the case of men, Islamic beards or, in the case of women, hijabs, niqabs or burkas.

Hate crimes against Muslim leaders and individuals

Muslim leaders who are wrongly demonised in sections of media as ‘extremist’ or ‘radical’ face an increased risk of attack, abuse and hostility.

ISLAMOPHOBIA AND DISCRIMINATION

Our preliminary research findings deal with institutional Islamophobia as well as more general discrimination against Muslims. This tends to underline the findings of well established if widely ignored research in the field. Our full report on the topic will be published in 2011.

Discrimination in politics

When dealing with discrimination against Muslims government ministers and parliamentarians are faced with a powerful lobby that argues forcefully against victim status for Muslims who face discrimination.

Discrimination against Muslim organisations

We find evidence of political discrimination against Muslim organisations. Both the previous government and the new coalition government are influenced by negative advice from influential neo-conservative think tanks such as Policy Exchange, the Centre for Social Cohesion and Quilliam.

Discrimination by police and public servants

We have found evidence of institutional discrimination against mosques and Islamic centres policing in local government and in local politics generally. This is not to overlook examples of good practice in policing local government and local politics that have been recorded as well.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Anti-Muslim hate crime: urgent government action needed

Violence and intimidation of Muslims and their places of worship and congregation has been at an unacceptable level since 9/11 and after a decade of neglect under the last New Labour administration the new coalition government of Conservatives and Liberal Democrats has an opportunity to tackle it belatedly but before it becomes worse still.

Anti-Muslim hate crime: urgent community action and funding needed

The moral imperative of public safety is no less urgent for community activists, voluntary bodies and charities concerned to make an impact at the grass roots. Established campaigning groups will not need advice from us about the tactical advantage of pursuing genuine grass roots remedies and not simply of waiting for government interest and support. Community projects like the Muslim Safety Forum (MSF) that aspire to support victims of anti-Muslim hate crime urgently need community funding and support.

Islamophobia and discrimination: political disinterest should be ended

We recommend government and parliament begins to take the issue of Islamophobia and discrimination seriously after a decade of neglect. It is a litmus test for the new coalition government's commitment to fairness and social justice.

Political attacks against mainstream Muslim organisations should not be funded and supported by government

Instead of funding divisive projects like Quilliam to denigrate and smear mainstream Muslim organisations government should adopt an inclusive approach to dialogue with Muslim community representatives. Urgent government action is needed to help remove the stigma that attaches to many Muslim organisations at the forefront of tackling Islamophobia and other outstanding voluntary work in deprived communities in the UK.

“

...it is the forcible removal from the US border of such an iconic figure as Yusuf Islam that most poignantly symbolises a transatlantic bond so rashly broken by George Bush and Tony Blair in the aftermath of 9/11 in the name of another special relationship.

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Part One

A Ten Year Research Project

1. Introduction

Islamophobia and Anti-Muslim Hate Crime: UK Case Studies marks the expansion of a wide-ranging collaboration that we will develop throughout the first decade of the new millennium to document and analyse grassroots community experience of bigotry, violence, intimidation and discrimination against Muslims in the UK. As such it should be regarded as introductory and foundational, providing a basis and framework for an ongoing ten year research programme.

It builds on our first report *Islamophobia and Anti-Muslim Hate Crime: a London Case Study* (published in January 2010)⁶⁴ and provides a blueprint for our forthcoming annual reports *Islamophobia and Anti-Muslim Hate Crime: European Case Studies*. This is not to suggest that the European Muslim Research Centre will be solely focused on this research topic in the decade ahead. Neither do we intend to suggest that bigotry, violence, intimidation and discrimination are the defining features of a multitude of daily interactions between Muslims and their neighbours or between Muslims and officialdom either in the UK or more widely across Europe.

On the contrary, we aim to contextualise negative experiences of violence, intimidation and discrimination against Muslims in community settings where positive behaviour – devoid of Islamophobia – by citizens and officialdom offers models of best practice and cause for optimism. That said, we are sufficiently concerned about the extent and reach of the problem of violence, intimidation and discrimination against Muslims as to regard it as our priority research interest for the foreseeable future.

As a matter of priority we wish to highlight the three most important recommendations in the report: (i) the urgent need for government, parliament and police to begin to take concerted action to tackle the problem of anti-Muslim hate crime in the UK; (ii) the urgent need for government to remove the stigma that attaches to many Muslim organisations at the forefront of tackling Islamophobia and other outstanding voluntary work in deprived communities in the UK; and (iii) the urgent need for funding for community activists, voluntary bodies and charities supporting victims of anti-Muslim hate crime.

In highlighting these issues for urgent attention we also seek to demonstrate how they are interconnected. According to our research findings the mainstream Muslim organisations most regularly stigmatised as being ‘radical’, ‘extremist’ or ‘fundamentalist’ are also the same ones who (i) face the greatest threat of anti-Muslim violence, intimidation and discrimination and (ii) are the most effective in defending their communities against the threat and providing solutions to the problem.

By making this link we also aim to highlight the extent to which the previous government’s war on terror strategy unwittingly contributed to the problems posed by Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hate crime.

We are especially concerned that a minority of influential political and media voices are able to stigmatise Muslims in Europe in ways that would not be tolerated in respect of other minority ethnic or other faith communities. Such institutional bigotry is intolerable in 2010 and should serve to shame governments and public institutions that acquiesce in it. Apart from legitimising institutional Islamophobia such bigotry also serves – wittingly or unwittingly – to license anti-Muslim hate crimes.

We have analysed sufficient primary data to support a thesis of symbiosis between anti-Muslim hate speech in UK politics and UK media and anti-Muslim hate crimes on UK streets as to warrant in-depth research to establish the extent and range of the problem. That, then, is our purpose.

The report contains preliminary research findings based on fieldwork in Muslim communities in Edinburgh, Glasgow, West Yorkshire, Greater Manchester, Merseyside, Wirral, West Midlands, East Midlands, Lincolnshire, Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Kent, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire, Wiltshire, Sussex, Surrey, Avon and Somerset, Devon and Greater London. In 2011 we will publish case studies from several towns and cities in these areas of the UK.’ then para break. In addition a questionnaire sent to mosques, Islamic institutions and Muslim organisations in the UK has provided valuable data. At all points an analysis of primary data is supplemented with a close reading of secondary sources, particularly helpful in this regard reference to data collected and analysed by the Institute of Race Relations, the Islamic Human Rights Commission, the Muslim Safety Forum and Islamophobia Watch.

For the purposes of this report we present introductory data analysis in two categories: anti-Muslim hate crime (our priority research focus at present) and Islamophobia and discrimination (our secondary research focus at present). To emphasise, we believe discrimination is equally important and we will pay equal attention to it over the next ten years but we regard violence and intimidation as a priority issue requiring urgent action from government, parliament, police and community groups.

On every day since 1st September 2009 at least one member of our research team has been engaged in community based research for this report. Our aim is to maintain close links with existing community contacts and to build additional grass roots coverage throughout the next ten years. This will have the benefit of presenting a consistent and deepening analysis of community experiences in relation to political developments and events that have a discernable impact in relation to Islamophobia, racism and anti-Muslim hate crime as they unfold.

We are involved in a collaborative research project and we acknowledge the invaluable contributions key individuals and organisations have made in the report itself. For now we should highlight the invaluable contribution of Chris Allen, the UK’s most experienced scholar on Islamophobia. It is a happy co-incidence that our report follows the recent publication of Allen’s new book *Islamophobia* which provides a definitive account of the topic.⁶⁵ As one of only a small handful of researchers to have studied the phenomenon of anti-Muslim sentiment before and after 9/11 Allen’s testimony is compelling on the significance of that date in 2001 as marking a severe worsening of negative responses to Muslims in the UK.

With notable exceptions, an exhaustive and encyclopaedic post 9/11, post 7/7 literature (academic, think-tank and journalistic) on terrorism, counter-terrorism, ‘radicalisation’ and ‘de-radicalisation’ has been principally concerned to examine Muslims as actual or potential threats to security and social cohesion. This is a prolific literature unprecedented in the

history of terrorism and is generally not premised on a concern with the welfare of Muslim communities in the UK. It does, however, sometimes acknowledge that 9/11, 7/7 and other high profile terrorist incidents and terrorist headlines in the media have prompted a backlash against Muslim communities in the UK (as elsewhere).⁶⁶

A much smaller literature takes issue with the narrow focus of this majority analysis and posits the notion that the war on terror has had much more of an adverse impact on Muslim communities than the terrorist attacks it was intended to counter. For the main part, this minority literature dwells on the adverse impact of military action, rendition and torture conducted under the auspices of the war on terror⁶⁷ and also on anti-terror legislation enacted by the Blair government in the aftermath of both 9/11 and 7/7.⁶⁸ Some of this literature focuses on the direct impact on individuals suspected or convicted of terrorism,⁶⁹ and some other deals with the direct and sometimes indirect impact on 'suspect' Muslim communities⁷⁰ and throughout Muslim communities more generally.⁷¹ We do not add to the literature in this report but we will do so in 2011.

For now, in an extension of this critical approach, we are concerned to highlight the extent to which the Blair government's enthusiastic participation in the war on terror unwittingly and negligently fuelled Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hate crime in the UK.⁷² That at least is what our research findings oblige us to do, not least when it suggests that the Blair government's legacy in this regard is enduring.

Not that our research findings are confined to this neglected outcome of the war on terror. Far from it, our research documents and analyses experiences in Muslim communities in towns and cities throughout the UK that extends far beyond the direct and indirect impact of the war on terror. None of it, however, obscures the clear impression that the war on terror has played a significant role in reaching the tipping point at which a small but sufficient minority of UK citizens have felt licensed and empowered to commit acts of violence against their Muslim neighbours and their places of worship and congregation.

While much more research would be needed to establish causal links between the prosecution of the war on terror in politics and the media and violence against Muslim communities we argue that there is a plausible *prima facie* case to answer. To be sure, we can find precious little evidence to suggest the contrary – that violence against Muslims in the UK would have reached the level it has without the impact of the war on terror in all its guises. Either way, whether we are right or wrong, the experience of criminal violence against Muslim citizens is real enough and cannot be ignored. Urgent action from government and police is overdue.

Urgent action to tackle violence and intimidation of Muslims and their places of worship and congregation does not need to wait for research findings about its underlying causes or a more precise quantification of its prevalence. The experience of victims speaks for itself. Certainly government has been quick to act against another kind of violent extremism even though research consensus about the causes of 7/7 remains elusive. Consistency of government conduct would be welcome and help to build fragile confidence in many Muslim communities.

Throughout our research reflects our grounding in political science and policing. As such we hope it augments the work of scholars who have analysed Islamophobia from sociological, theological, legal, human rights and anthropological perspectives.⁷³

Our purpose in this report is to expose and illuminate bigotry, discrimination, intimidation and violence against Muslims living in the UK so as to encourage fellow citizens, politicians,

policy makers, public servants and the media to tackle and reduce it. In doing so we are motivated by a strong belief that Muslims should be treated equally and as fairly as all other citizens in the UK. We do not argue that Islam deserves special protection but rather that mosques and Islamic institutions should be safeguarded and respected just the same as other religious buildings and institutions. Similarly, we do not argue that Muslims are the only victims of bigotry, discrimination, intimidation and violence in the UK but simply that the problems Muslims face should be taken as seriously as when directed against other minority communities and far more seriously than they have been in the decade just passed.

To an extent the failure to take anti-Muslim hate crimes as seriously as other hate crimes in the UK is reflected in the hate crime literature that has developed since the concept was first imported from the US in the aftermath of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry.⁷⁴ Research and practice in this arena has so far failed to record and quantify the scale of the problem faced by Muslims as effectively as hate crimes have been recorded, monitored and analysed in respect of other minority communities in the UK. In part, this failure can be attributed to an inhibition within social sciences generally to give faith identities the same status as ethnic or more generally secular identities. In any event a lack of academic focus on a problem where Muslims are victims of crime coincides with a period where academic attention has burgeoned on the inter-related topics of radicalisation, terrorism and violent extremism where Muslims are often portrayed as suspects instead.

Since we published our London case study in January 2010 we have been struck by the extent to which Muslims in the UK often face bigotry, discrimination, intimidation and violence that is also directed towards other minorities, most especially new immigrant communities and more established minority ethnic communities. This is hardly surprising given the extent to which Muslims in the UK contribute to minority ethnic communities and also to new immigrant communities. It is one of our first report's many shortcomings that it failed to adequately illuminate this wider reality and we are grateful to Jenny Bourne at the Institute of Race Relations (IRR) for bringing it to our attention.⁷⁵ We are also indebted to Bourne and her colleagues at IRR for their important report *Racial Violence: The Buried Issue*⁷⁶ which sets out in stark terms the extent to which racist violence continues to make many of the poorest UK streets unsafe.

Moreover, in *Racial violence laid bare*⁷⁷ the IRR news team highlight cases which show the extent to which the problem persists in 2010. Our greater awareness of ongoing racist violence, however, offers no rationale for reducing our research focus on Muslim victims. On the contrary, it presents a basis for illuminating a reality on UK streets in which Muslims face a range of violent threats which are variously directed against them because of their faith, ethnicity or status or for some combination of these and other factors. In addition, of course, a Muslim on a UK street late at night faces the same random threats of alcohol fuelled street violence as every other citizen. Which is not to argue that all alcohol fuelled street violence is random. Far from it, as many of our interviewees testify, they have been attacked or abused in the street or on a bus or train by an individual whose drunkenness or intoxication has merely served to loosen any inhibitions about expressing anti-Muslim sentiments. This is an issue that warrants close judicial oversight because it has become far too commonplace in courtrooms around the UK for alcohol use or abuse to be proffered and understood as mitigation in cases where an individual has been charged with a criminal offence in relation to an assault on a Muslim.

For that matter, Muslims in the UK also face the same random threats to their safety

that arise from sporadic terrorist attacks. We were given this salutary reminder when interviewing a volunteer at the East London Mosque who recalled how the daughter of one of their worshippers was killed in the 7/7 bomb attack in London.⁷⁸ In the same interview we were struck by the amount of practical support the East London Mosque gave to injured victims of the London bombings. This, incidentally, is just one example from the rich picture that emerges of pro-active citizenship by Muslim community groups around the UK which demonstrably undermines pejorative media accounts that seek to portray the same groups as isolationist, sectarian and subversive.⁷⁹ It is no co-incidence that some of the most civically engaged Muslim community groups are the very same ones that are regularly stigmatised as extremist or 'radical' by influential politicians, media commentators and think-tanks such as Policy Exchange and the Quilliam Foundation.⁸⁰

It should not therefore be difficult to conceptualise the context for our research. Anti-Muslim bigotry gives rise to violence against Muslims in the UK and that is an additional threat to the general threats Muslims either share with all fellow citizens (e.g. random street violence and terrorism) or with some fellow citizens (e.g. racist street violence). Research for this UK report confirms what we established in our first report in respect of London – many attacks against Muslims are motivated by a negative view of Muslims or Islam and are therefore most accurately described as *anti-Muslim* or *Islamophobic* hate crimes.⁸¹ Interviews with Muslim victims of hate crimes who have been attacked by individuals or gangs from minority ethnic communities (sometimes from the same minority ethnic backgrounds as the victim) confirms the distinctive nature of anti-Muslim hate crimes and the need to analyse them both on their own merits and also in the context of ongoing racist hate crimes.

While we give primacy and priority to the experience of the victims of anti-Muslim and racist violence we also pay close attention to grass roots Muslim community experience of bigotry and discrimination more widely. Here we find evidence to support the thesis that Muslims often face prejudice and disadvantage because of their faith to an extent that other faith communities in the UK do not. In making this claim we do not seek to suggest that Muslim community experience is unique but rather that it should be understood on its own merits. In terms of solutions we find evidence around the UK to suggest that non-Muslims and especially other faith communities have a vital role to play in helping their Muslim neighbours to tackle the problem.

In February 2010 it was our privilege to help the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) and The Cordoba Foundation (TCF) organise and participate in a meeting in the Houses of Parliament calling for an All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Islamophobia.⁸² Notwithstanding admirable support from a handful of parliamentarians we were struck by widespread apathy towards the problem. This lacklustre response from the heart of Westminster only serves to galvanise our commitment to producing high calibre research that may assist those few politicians who take the issue seriously. Since February we have seen a new Conservative and Liberal Democrat coalition government come into office without so far offering any indication that it appreciates the importance and significance of the issue any more than the government that preceded it. We therefore hope that this report will provide evidence to assist our partners in the MCB, The Cordoba Foundation, Forward Thinking and Engage and in many other groups around the UK to maintain pressure on politicians to form an APPG on Islamophobia. That would represent an important first step in achieving a change for the better in the UK.

Since 9/11 a significant amount of government and private finance has funded academic

and think-tank research intended to (i) elucidate and counter the threat posed by terrorism, violent extremism, extremism and ‘radicalisation’ in the UK; (ii) elucidate and counter threats to social cohesion in the UK; and (iii) elucidate and counter the threat of racism and anti-Semitism in the UK. During the same period government and private finance has largely failed to fund research into the experience of victims of anti-Muslim hostility, bigotry, discrimination, intimidation and violence in the UK. This report represents a first step in filling this research gap.

The one conceptual and typological issue we need to address at the outset is our use of the terms Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hate crime. Notwithstanding the extent to which the two terms are interlinked and interdependent we use each one to denote and describe two discernable and separate experiences.

In interviews with Muslims across the UK we have been struck by the adverse impact 9/11 and the war on terror has had on their communities. For some Muslims the deterioration since 9/11 has been so marked that they recall the 1990s as a bygone time when Islam was widely respected and mosques were no more likely to be attacked than any other religious building in the UK. In the next section, *Born in the USA*, we seek to illustrate the significance of the UK government’s pro-active involvement in the war on terror as a major determining factor in the deterioration of Muslim community experiences in the UK in terms of community safety, community confidence and civic well-being generally.

2. Born in the USA

One of us was born in Baltimore and the other in London. What we shared growing up in both cities was a close engagement with the popular culture of the USA and the UK – especially the music. Indeed, as for millions of others on both sides of the Atlantic, there was often a strong sense in which the popular music of both countries had become wedded in mid-Atlantic to become one. For example, in the mid 1980s Bruce Springsteen was as phenomenally popular in the UK as he was in the US just as Yusuf Islam, then Cat Stevens, topped both the US and UK album charts in the early 1970s. It is not fanciful to suggest that songs like *Peace Train* and *Born in the USA* had become truly transatlantic, soundtracks to ordinary working lives in both countries. Sadly, an unintended consequence of the war on terror was that the singer-songwriter of *Peace Train* would no longer be welcome in the US. In 2004 his entry to the US was barred and his flight diverted back to the UK where he would later compose *Boots and Sand* to satirise and lament this unexpected and tragic breakdown of a seemingly irrevocable grass roots relationship:

As we reached the border, seven sheriffs arrived

Me and my girl saddled outside

Is your name this [I guess it is]

Your on our no song list [oh no sir, this can't be so?]⁸³

Other peace loving British and American Muslims have suffered humiliation in the name of the war on terror – often with far more serious consequences. Yet perhaps it is the forcible removal from the US border of such an iconic figure as Yusuf Islam that most poignantly symbolises a transatlantic bond so rashly broken by George Bush and Tony Blair in the aftermath of 9/11 in the name of another special relationship. To be sure, it is symptomatic of the war on terror’s failure to remain focused on al-Qaeda – the actual terrorist movement that planned the 9/11 attacks – that Yusuf Islam was barred from entering the US because

of dubious intelligence linking one of his many charity ventures to support for terrorism. That the intelligence appeared old and unreliable and did not in any event relate to al-Qaeda, perfectly encapsulates the experience of hundreds of UK and US citizens who, in a variety of contexts, faced institutionalised violence, harassment and discrimination solely because the war on terror wrongly targeted Muslims out with and far beyond the orbit of a very small enclave known as al-Qaeda.

There is therefore a category of UK victims who have, like Yusuf Islam, suffered institutional discrimination that has been aimed directly at them by US government officials and military personnel carrying out policies supported by the UK government under the umbrella of the war on terror. The most serious harm has been inflicted on UK citizens and residents who have been detained at Guantanamo Bay or elsewhere around the world by the US, by way of extraordinary rendition.⁸⁴ Belatedly, and out of office, former UK foreign secretary, David Miliband concedes that the US did “bad things” to terror suspects in the wake of 9/11 which the UK government was, he argues, too slow to realise.⁸⁵

In fact, contrary evidence that the UK government was deeply complicit in the torture of its own citizens and residents is well rehearsed and may yet be tested in a forthcoming inquiry headed by Sir Peter Gibson.⁸⁶ Suffice to say it has been axiomatic to the war on terror that the normal rules of evidence, interview and intelligence analysis did not apply when assessing whether a UK (or other) Muslim detainee was or was not a “terror suspect”. Instead, what became important was whether interrogators could establish whether a detainee shared what US President George Bush assessed to be the enemy’s aim: remaking the world by establishing a “totalitarian Islamic empire across the Middle East,” what he called “a Caliphate.”⁸⁷ According to Bush’s influential defence secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, the enemy sought to achieve its aim not solely by terrorism but also by destabilising “moderate mainstream Muslim regimes” throughout the Middle East and North Africa.⁸⁸ Thus the war on terror wrongly diagnosed the terrorist threat to the US and UK and did much to sustain it.⁸⁹

Moreover, by embracing torture as a counter-terrorism tool the war on terror made it impossible to establish the authenticity of claims that individual UK citizens and residents detained as “terror suspects” were guilty or innocent. As such detainees from the UK including Ruhul Ahmed, Shafiq Rasul, Asif Iqbal (known collectively as ‘the Tipton Three’), Moazzem Begg, Binyan Mohammed, Bisher Amin Khalil Al-Rawi, Jamil al Banna, Abdur-Raheem Aamer, Jamal Abdullah and Omar Deghayes should have become entitled to a presumption of innocence according to the prior rules of US and UK justice. Instead, they have been demonised and attacked. To illustrate, Omar Deghayes has swapped torture by the US military for the constant threat of attack on his family home near Brighton.⁹⁰ Even Amnesty International has suffered internal dissent over its willingness to offer unconditional support to UK Muslim victims of torture by – or on behalf of – the US government.⁹¹ This year Gita Sahgal, a leading human rights activist, criticised colleagues at Amnesty International UK for working with torture victim Moazzem Begg on an initiative entitled *Counter Terror with Justice*:

*I believe the campaign fundamentally damages Amnesty International's integrity and, more importantly, constitutes a threat to human rights. To be appearing on platforms with Britain's most famous supporter of the Taliban, whom we treat as a human rights defender, is a gross error of judgment.*⁹²

Although an independent review⁹³ disagreed with Sahgal the controversy highlights the extent of the success of the Bush-Blair led campaign to re-define and expand the “terror threat”. Notwithstanding the failure of the war on terror in Iraq, from 2006 onwards political spin in

Washington and Whitehall sought to legitimate the war on terror in Afghanistan on the same false premise that it improved the safety of US and UK citizens from terrorist attack. That is the context in which a small but significant number of UK citizens have endured torture or serious infringements of their civil liberties on the basis that fundamental rules of UK justice had been jettisoned in the face an exceptional and existential “terror threat”. That has been the real outcome of Prime Minister Blair’s claim that “the rules of the game have changed”.⁹⁴ Lavishly funded, supporters of the Bush-Blair strategy managed to keep it intact even though serious flaws in the approach became reasonably well known and well documented.

In contrast, the notion that a terrorist attack in the US prompted an upsurge in anti-Muslim bigotry and violence in the UK although well established is less well known. Our research certainly provides compelling evidence to support the proposition that Muslims in the UK were better respected and safer before 11 September 2001. It is therefore interesting to note how a plan to build an Islamic centre near to the site of the main target of that terrorist attack in New York has the same capacity to stir anti-Muslim sentiment in the UK nine years later. To illustrate, anti-Muslim bigots in the English Defence League (EDL) take an inspirational lead from influential anti-Muslim campaigners in the US including Robert Spencer, Daniel Pipes and Pamela Geller who are determined that Park51, a project they choose to call the *Ground Zero Mosque* will not be opened.⁹⁵ Indeed, a huge number of US produced anti-Muslim books, blogs and videos produced since 9/11 have served to invigorate a growing number of campaigns against Muslims generally and often specifically against the building of mosques and Islamic centres in the UK.

This is not to suggest that Islamophobia in the UK does not have any domestic roots and is only fed by propaganda that travels across the Atlantic – far from it. There is a vigorous import of anti-Muslim hate material from European neighbours as well as the regular production of home-grown material. Rather, it seems important to highlight the extent to which violent anti-Muslim bigotry in the UK relies on a post 9/11 analysis of Islam and Muslims that has its origins in the US and gained considerable traction in the implementation and promotion of the war on terror. Richard Jackson’s *Writing the War on Terrorism* remains a good starting place for those wishing to recall the wide sphere of US neo-conservative influence in a counter-terrorism policy that was wholeheartedly adopted by Prime Minister Blair and his sofa government in Downing Street.⁹⁶ It may be especially illuminating to recall Blair’s recitation of Cheneyesque depictions of a wide-ranging ideological enemy when contemplating assaults on British men and women motivated in large measure by a false belief that their Muslim victims shared some of the guilt of al-Qaeda.

In consequence, it is important to emphasise that it is neither al-Qaeda’s 9/11 terrorist attack nor the plan to build an Islamic centre in the vicinity of Ground Zero in Lower Manhattan that fuels the bigotry and violence against Muslims that is exported to the UK. Rather, it is the interpretation and presentation of 9/11 as being Islamically inspired that has fuelled transatlantic Islamophobia. We think this is a crucially important distinction to make at the outset. Not least because the twin towers of the World Trade Centre (WTC) might easily have crumbled to the ground when it was bombed for the first time by forerunners of al-Qaeda in 1993. Fortunately, when a massive truck bomb exploded in the WTC underground car park it failed to destroy the landmark building – something it was clearly intended to achieve. Regrettably, six people were killed and a further 1042 injured. However, on that occasion, no war on terror ensued and instead the FBI was allowed to conduct a relatively low key international criminal investigation without recourse to the wholesale infringement of the

civil rights of Muslims in the US and abroad. Indeed, in response to the first bomb attack on the WTC, the demands of justice and the needs of victims were met in the finest traditions of the US judicial system.

The same scrupulous attention to judicial integrity marked the painstaking investigation into what was, prior to 9/11, the most devastating terrorist attack in the US. In 1995 the Oklahoma City bomb attack killed 168 people and inflicted serious injuries and damage to property. Once informed speculation that this bomb attack was carried out by Arab Muslims gave way to the evidence that Timothy McVeigh, an extremist nationalist US army veteran, was responsible for it, the ensuing political and media commentary was notable for its restraint and responsibility. While criminal investigative attention properly fell on McVeigh's close associates in the violent extremist nationalist milieu in the US every effort was made to avoid stigmatising a significant minority of US citizens who shared some of the bomber's political grievances.

In fact, in stark contrast to 9/11, in response to both the 1993 and 1995 terrorist attacks in the US rigorous and successful criminal prosecutions were mounted against committed violent extremists without in any way criminalising or alienating the communities from which they came. To that extent the investigations were, for the most part, models of best counter-terrorism practice whereby due attention was paid to maintaining positive relations with those minority or alienated communities where terrorist movements seek recruits and supporters. Notwithstanding notable occasions when it fell short this was also the tried and tested approach to countering terrorism in the UK before 9/11. Thus, when the FBI asked their UK counterparts to investigate the background of Ramzi Yousef, a suspect who would later be convicted and sentenced to imprisonment for the first WTC bomb attack, there were no concurrent briefings to the news media about Yousef's activities in the UK. Instead, UK police officers were able to piece together useful information about the four years Yousef had spent studying electrical engineering at what was then the Swansea Institute of Higher Education without undue media intrusion.

By way of contrast with post 9/11 counter-terrorism, in 1993 office bearers at the Federation of Islamic Student Society (FOSIS) were able to assist in the criminal investigation of the WTC attack in the UK without in any way suffering vilification from neo-conservative think-tank experts seeking to brand them as extremists who bore vicarious liability for Yousef's actions. Instead, office bearers in FOSIS were able to discharge their strong sense of civic responsibility to assist a serious criminal investigation without in any way compromising their equally strong sense of the rights of a criminal suspect who had been a student in the UK. No such moral equanimity would be possible – either for FOSIS or other responsible Muslim organisations – post 9/11 if, for instance, they were asked to assist in investigations concerning terrorist suspects unlawfully detained in Guantanamo Bay or elsewhere around the world by way of extraordinary rendition. Such were the adverse consequences of the war on terror on community focused counter-terrorism in the UK.

It is no co-incidence that neo-conservative think-tank accounts of FOSIS and other Muslim organisations in the UK as 'conveyor belts' towards terrorism on which young men became radicalised have their origins in post 9/11 USA too. The Rand Corporation, the Middle East Forum and the Hudson Institute were among the first powerful think-tanks in the US to export this unscientific analysis to the UK. Very soon UK subsidiaries such as Policy Exchange, Centre for Social Cohesion, Civitas and the Quilliam Foundation would embrace this neo conservative US import with the same enthusiasm as then Prime Minister Blair.

In consequence tried and tested allies in counter-terrorism such as FOSIS became publicly stigmatised as dangerous subversives instead.

Although redundant, it remains important to stress that a traditional and viable investigative response to 9/11 was available to the US government just as it had been in 1993 and 1995. The same point is equally well made in respect of the UK government who had contemporaneous experience of the efficacy of a less militaristic approach in regard to tackling Irish republican terrorism. Instead, the war on terror was a wholly unprecedented and unproven response to an act of terrorism and relied greatly for public approval on the influence of the same Islamophobic pundits who now rail against Park51, the Ground Zero Mosque. Both the tone and substance of the war on terror fuelled the false perception that either a majority or a significant minority of Muslims bore some vicarious responsibility for 9/11 – either through tacit support, negligence or outright wickedness. More specifically, extremists in the EDL, the British National Party (BNP) and like minded groups, have adopted the targeting tactics demonstrated by Daniel Pipes in London in January 2007 when he debated Ken Livingstone, then Mayor of London, of describing politically active Muslim organisations like FOSIS as radical and subversive Islamists.

Gilles Kepel shares much of Daniel Pipes' analysis and might qualify as France's leading expert on 'radical Islam'. Like Pipes' he sees the UK as a hotbed of Islamist radicalism and subversion that has negligently been allowed to flourish. Yet when he travels across the English Channel he cannot muster anything like the same level of popular support as Pipes, his US counterpart. There is no denying the supremacy of US export strength in this arena. Just as French accents have struggled to invade UK pop charts so too is an American accent preferred for propaganda purposes by extremists in the UK – hence the cachet of Pamela Geller and Adam Gadahn who were born and grew up in the USA, on Long Island and in Oregon respectively. On the one hand, Geller's hate filled anti-Islamic rhetoric is cited by the EDL in support of their campaigns against 'radical Islam' in the UK. Likewise, Gadahn, now an al-Qaeda spokesman, is cited by al-Muhajiroun (EDL's polar opposite) and it's front organisations in support of their perceived defence of Islam against attacks by Geller and her associates in the US and UK. Courtesy of YouTube and numerous websites Geller and Gadahn have therefore become popular American voices for opposing extremist audiences in the UK. As for the mainstream, US influence over UK foreign policy US influence of UK media is well known. What deserves to be better understood is the extent to which anti Muslim bigotry has burgeoned in the UK since 9/11 with significant influence from powerful voices in the US.

'Before 9/11' Asif recalled, 'I was never called a terrorist'.⁹⁷ Since then Asif, like so many of our Muslim interviewees across the UK, has grown used to being abused in the street as a terrorist, often by men when they have been drinking in the evening but also during the day by men often driving past them in cars, vans and lorries. Asif is also typical in noting that the risk of this kind of abuse increases whenever a high profile terrorist incident occurs in the UK or elsewhere in the world and the media reporting identifies the perpetrators as 'Muslim', 'Islamic' or 'Islamist'. He is also typical in so far as his discernable and distinctive Muslim appearance appears to make him a target. That is to say, by contrast, Muslims who wear Western clothes and Muslim men who are clean shaven tend to be at a much reduced risk of abuse of this kind.

Thankfully for Asif, this regular risk of abuse has not so far resulted in violence. For many other Muslims, however, violence has accompanied abuse of this kind. While the motivation

for violence against Muslims in the UK is not restricted to a false perception of Muslims as terrorists it appears to have become a major factor since 9/11. It is important, therefore, to recall the full impact of 9/11 on UK politics and UK media representations of Muslims.

No other single terrorist incident has ever changed UK foreign and domestic policies as dramatically as the al-Qaeda attack on US soil on 11 September 2001. Al-Qaeda's subsequent attack on UK soil on 7 July 2005 had a profound impact in both arenas as well but only to compound and re-enforce UK policy decisions that were made immediately post 9/11. We have written elsewhere about the negative domestic counter-terrorism impact of the slavish nature of UK policy that endorsed every aspect of the US response to 9/11.⁹⁸ All that needs to be highlighted for the purposes of this report is the extent to which US and UK policies became indissolubly bound under the all embracing policy of the war of terror. Thus when the 7/7 bombers sought to rationalise and justify their bomb attacks on London commuters they did so by reference to active support UK support for the war in Iraq – a major component of the war on terror.

The only other European country that has had anything like the same pro-active engagement in the war on terror as the UK – and specifically in relation to the war in Iraq – is Spain. Suffice to say, rail travellers in Madrid suffered what is likely to have been an Al-Qaeda inspired bomb attack on 11 March 2004.⁹⁹ When giving evidence to the Chilcott Inquiry, Baroness Manningham-Buller who was head of the UK Security Service (MI5) from 2002 to 2007 revealed that “there was such a surge of warnings of home-grown terrorist threats after the invasion of Iraq that MI5 asked for – and got – a 100 per cent increase in its budget”.¹⁰⁰ She told the inquiry:

*Our involvement in Iraq radicalised, for want of a better word, a whole generation of young people – a few among a generation – who saw our involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan as being an attack on Islam... Arguably we gave Osama bin Laden his Iraqi jihad so that he was able to move into Iraq in a way that he was not before.*¹⁰¹

As so many British citizens have made crystal clear in interviews with us their safety, comfort and wellbeing in the UK has diminished demonstrably since 9/11. Prior to that date their status as visibly practicing Muslims did not raise the risk of abuse or violence in the street to the extent that it has done since. In consequence, they have learned to watch anxiously each time a terrorist incident is reported in the media as it is likely to exacerbate the misconceived notion that some or all Muslims are to some degree complicit in it and thereby licence further anti-Muslim abuse and violence. Given the symbolic importance of 9/11 Muslims in the UK are equally anxious at the time of writing that the Ground Zero Mosque media story will impact equally badly in the UK. Conversely, that fear will be the hope and expectation of EDL activists and their associates. In the circumstances it is no surprise that arson and other violent attacks on mosques in the US and UK have reached a dangerously high level. Only urgent and concerted action will help reduce these violent attacks in which the risk of loss of life is real.

To begin to reduce the problem, education is key. Significant progress can be made by dispelling myths. For instance, we are struck by the gulf between the reality of modern Muslim social history in the US and UK and the imagined, negative portrayals of it by anti-Muslim and racist bigots. In reality Muslims have made valuable and substantial contributions to the economic, security and social wellbeing of both countries. Since Muslims began to settle in the UK in significant numbers during the second half of the last millennium contributions have been significant though widely undervalued. In addition, interviews with the children

of first generation Muslim immigrants from Pakistan, Bangladesh and India highlight the many sacrifices their parents made so as to provide homes and future prospects for their families in the UK.

Regrettably, since 9/11, many mainstream politicians and media personalities in the UK have contributed to a false and negative view of Muslims as terrorists, terrorist sympathisers, extremists, or subversives intent on an Islamification of the UK. That is also the view that has become commonplace amongst EDL supporters and their allies – their points of reference are not only BNP and United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) politicians but also mainstream politicians and commentators in the mainstream media. When they vilify Muslims and mosques they have reason to believe they have tacit support in the heart of the political and media elite that is strongly wedded to powerful counterparts in the US. It is therefore with a sense of foreboding that we recall the prevalence of racist violence often described by perpetrators as ‘Paki-bashing’ that was a common experience for many Muslim families living in the UK from the 1960s onwards. A Muslim youth worker in London recalls:

*My parents were bullied by racists. They kept their heads down. Just kept working for their children. We started to defend ourselves against racist attacks from the National Front. In the end we won, things finally got better, but it was a tough fight. Thought that was all history then along comes the BNP and the EDL...*¹⁰²

The exemplary record of Muslims as hard working law abiding citizens is not unlike that of other immigrant communities to the UK and in the US. Yet it is one that needs to be highlighted in the face of relentless negative, misinformation pedalled by a new generation of anti-Muslim, racist bigots. Muslim families in the UK have suffered enough. Many are now facing violent anti-Muslim bigotry having grown up coping with violent racism on a daily basis. It is time to support them and not allow them to be demonised further still. We feel certain that the overwhelming majority of UK citizens would agree with us – especially if they knew the extent of the problem we have detailed in this report.

We therefore trust this report will be used by community activists to help persuade government ministers, politicians of all parties, policy makers, civil servants, police officers and journalists to begin to take the issue seriously, urgently and responsibly. This is not to overlook the outstanding contributions made by many individuals in each of these categories of public service but rather to seek to empower them and create lasting change. As part of that task Muslim organisations in the UK would do well to study and emulate the outstanding work of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), a US Muslim civil liberties advocacy organisation that has been at the forefront of effective and constructive opposition to the negative campaigning against Park51, the so-called Ground Zero Mosque.

Similarly, for our part, we will aspire to achieve some of the impact of Brooklyn born John Esposito who continues to speak eloquently and reasonably against the preachers of hate in the US. To illustrate our intent we have taken the liberty of adapting a passage from Esposito’s clarion call to his fellow Americans by uniting UK and US citizens in a common purpose:¹⁰³

*US and UK citizens should distinguish the faith of mainstream Muslims from the claims of a minority of extremists who justify their acts of violence and terrorism in the name of Islam. Blurring this distinction plays into the hands of preachers of hate (Muslim and non-Muslim) whose rhetoric incites and demonizes, alienates and marginalizes and leads to the adoption of domestic policies that undermine the civil liberties of Muslims and non-Muslims alike.*¹⁰⁴

Such a worthy aim might surely win the approval of Yusuf Islam and Bruce Springsteen on both sides of the Atlantic.

“

we aim to show how the articulate, sometimes sophisticated views of Amis, Liddle and other similarly powerful voices translate into street violence in the hands of less articulate thugs who target Muslims for attack in their preferred way.

”



**UNITED
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3. Islamophobia or anti-Muslim Racism?

How to approach the experience of Muslims in the UK through the prism of Islamophobia given the term invites so much conceptual uncertainty and controversy? With due circumspection and caution, to be sure. Yet to ignore or dismiss the question on the basis that the term Islamophobia is derived from a notion of fear rather than a notion of bigotry would be to join a long cast of active and tacit apologists for bigotry against Muslims in the UK. Martin Amis is one of many public intellectuals in the UK who have spoken articulately about the widely perceived false premise of Islamophobia and a commensurate need to challenge the spread of Islamic thought in the UK. Yet as the novelist Ronan Bennett pointed out in 2007 it has become possible for Amis and others to attack Muslims in ways that would be unacceptable under the rubric of anti-racism.¹⁰⁵ What, Bennett asks, are we to make of the following statement:

*Asians are gaining on us demographically at a huge rate. A quarter of humanity now and by 2025 they'll be a third. Italy's down to 1.1 child per woman. We're just going to be outnumbered. While we're at it, what do you think of this, incidentally from the same speaker: "The Black community will have to suffer until it gets its house in order." Or this, the same speaker again: "I just don't hear from moderate Judaism, do you?" And (yes, same speaker): "Strip-searching Irish people. Discriminatory stuff, until it hurts the whole Irish community and they start getting tough with their children".*¹⁰⁶

The speaker was Martin Amis and Bennett has modified the quotations, with Asians, Blacks and Irish substituting for Muslims, and Judaism for Islam – “though, it should be stressed”, Bennett adds, “these are the only amendments”.¹⁰⁷ Bennett is absolutely right to claim that “Amis’s views are symptomatic of a much wider and deeper hostility to Islam and intolerance of otherness”.¹⁰⁸ To illustrate the point he refers to a debate Is Islam good for London sponsored by the London Evening Standard. It is worth accepting his invitation to “do another substitution here and imagine the reaction had Judaism been the subject”:¹⁰⁹

*As Rabbi Pete Tobias noted [...]”¹¹⁰, the so-called debate was sinisterly reminiscent of the paper’s campaign a century ago to alert its readers to the “problem of the alien”, namely the eastern European Jews fleeing persecution who had found refuge in the capital. In this context, Rod Liddle’s contribution to proceedings – “Islamophobia? Count me in” – sounds neither brave, brash nor provocatively outrageous, merely racist. Those who claim that Islamophobia can’t be racist, because Islam is a religion not a race, are fooling themselves: religion is not only about faith but also about identity, background and culture, and Muslims are overwhelmingly non-white. Islamophobia is racist, and so is anti-Semitism.”*¹¹¹

What then of our task of approaching Muslim community experience through the prism of Islamophobia? It might certainly have been far easier if the term Islamophobia had not become such common coinage and the notion of anti-Muslim racism or anti-Muslim bigotry had become widely adopted instead. Yet by juxtaposing experiences of street violence against minority ethnic communities with experiences of street violence against Muslim communities we hope to illuminate shortcomings in all three conceptual approaches and to do greater justice to the reality on contemporary UK streets. In doing so we also hope to illustrate how and why established mantras of anti-racism policy are so difficult to apply when those who deserve anti-racism support and protection happen to be Muslims. Most importantly of all, we aim to show how the articulate, sometimes sophisticated views of Amis, Liddle and other similarly powerful voices translate into street violence in the hands of less articulate thugs who target Muslims for attack in their preferred way.

Few academics would demur from the proposition that the concept and major typologies

of racism accurately conceptualise defining experiences of minority ethnic communities in the UK. This is particularly applicable to black and Asian victims of violence, bigotry, hostility, suspicion and discrimination inflicted by members of majority communities and the politicians and pundits who represent them. In fact, sociologists and other academics and researchers have produced voluminous literature on the topic of racism that has helped shape anti-racism policies during the last four decades.¹¹² In the UK the most consistent and cogent example of this synergy between conceptual thinking about racism and policy implementation in the form of anti-racism measures can be noted in the work of the Institute of Race Relations¹¹³ although strongly critical of government which is rightly credited with having had a direct bearing on the outcome of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry.¹¹⁴ But as Chris Allen notes (see 4 below) the notion of institutional racism enshrined in the body politic¹¹⁵ by Lord Macpherson does not translate easily to a notion of institutional Islamophobia. In fact, the concept of Islamophobia per se enjoys none of the academic and policy-maker cachet often associated with the concept of racism. Still less has a government-community activist alliance developed anti-Islamophobia campaigns in the same way anti-racism campaigns have become established, commonplace and very often successful.

Indeed, Allen is one of a mere handful of scholars in the UK who have ploughed lone furrows studying the phenomenon of Islamophobia during the last two decades. Consequently, his personal reflection on the experience of studying the topic is both illuminating and thought provoking. Most importantly, in the context of this research project, Allen's negative experience of the prolonged isolation of research on Islamophobia helps to explain our determination to achieve wider recognition of the topic and the related problems faced by Muslims in the UK and throughout Europe. Moreover, frankly, reflecting on Allen's experience over two decades it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that there has been such an aversion to pro-actively defending Muslims in mainstream political and media circles as to warrant the notion of institutional Islamophobia as entrenched now as racism ever was before the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry.

That said, we should note at the outset the extent to which the concept of Islamophobia is deficient in adequately or accurately describing the phenomenon of anti-Muslim bigotry, discrimination and violence. In an otherwise outstanding and pioneering work the Runnymede Trust's seminal account of Islamophobia in the UK fails to sufficiently distinguish between acceptable objections to Islam and unacceptable behaviour towards Muslims.¹¹⁶ Indeed, an ill-conceived conflation between a lawful fear or phobia towards a religion and an unlawful disregard for the rights of a religious minority has contributed to a failure to help Muslim victims in the same way victims of racism have often been helped during the same period. As we demonstrate in this report, this failure has been all the more dramatic during the last decade when the impact of terrorism inspired or directed by al-Qaeda and the war on terror launched in response by US and UK governments has put Muslims under unprecedented and pejorative scrutiny.

It is no coincidence that some of the best analyses of Muslim community experience in the last decade have conceptualised the problem as anti-Muslim bigotry or anti-Muslim racism rather than Islamophobia. Thus, in the context of the war on terror, Liz Fekete argued in 2004, anti-foreignness (or xeno-racism¹¹⁷) was "expanded to include minority ethnic communities" that have been "settled in Europe for decades – simply because they [were] Muslim".¹¹⁸ Similarly, Tariq Modood usefully conceptualised a development of cultural racism as 'Muslimophobia' rather than Islamophobia.¹¹⁹ As a precursor to this more recent phenomenon, Modood charts

the rise of cultural racism as a tangible development from an earlier biological racism.¹²⁰ In what has proved to be remarkably prescient, prior to 9/11, Modood anticipated the decline of colour prejudice ‘while discourses attacking the collective cultures of minority groups rise’.¹²¹ This is the point, he suggested, at which “cultural racism would have come into its own”:

*...it is quite possible that we shall witness in the next few decades [starting 2000] an increasing de-racialisation of, say, culturally assimilated Afro-Caribbeans and Asians, along with, simultaneously, a racialisation of other culturally different; Asians, Arabs and non-White Muslims.*¹²²

According to compelling evidence from the streets of the UK introduced in this report Modood’s only predictive failure was to overlook the extent to which white Muslim women wearing hijabs, niqabs, burkas or other items of Islamic clothing would be targeted by violent and bigoted non-Muslim assailants (of all colours and ethnic origins) in the first decade of the new millennium he was looking ahead to. With the benefit of hindsight that oversight seems wholly explicable given Modood was writing before Prime Minister Blair responded to a terrorist attack in the US by declaring ‘in apocalyptic tones’ that the ‘real and existential’ global threat of ‘Islamic extremism’ would have to be fought “whatever the political cost”.¹²³ In fact, Modood’s anticipatory analysis bears closer scrutiny:

*Cultural racism is likely to be particularly aggressive against those minority communities that want to maintain – and not just defensively – some of the basic elements of their culture or religion; if, far from denying their difference (beyond the colour of their skin) they want to assert this difference in public, and demand that they be respected just as they are.*¹²⁴

Indirectly confirming Modood’s prediction, Fekete demonstrates how ‘assimilationist Muslims’ post 9/11 became media celebrities ‘enjoying inordinate media coverage while the voices of other Muslims, who do not support assimilation, are silenced or ridiculed’.¹²⁵ As Fekete notes, anthropologist Marianne Gullestad at the University of Oslo helpfully describes this a ‘star system’ which results in a “diversion of public attention and a crippling of critical awareness”:¹²⁶

She [Gullestad] shows how the media elevate individual Muslims who support the majority view of immigrant culture as backward and European culture as innately homogenous and morally superior.¹²⁷

In all probability Modood’s anticipation of this kind of cultural racism would have been realised in the absence of al-Qaeda’s spectacular terrorist campaign in the US, UK and Spain. However, as Fekete illustrates, the UK’s enthusiastic embrace of the war on terror compounded the problem in ways this report examines. In addition, the evidence we adduce from around the UK suggests that it was the prosecution and presentation of the war on terror by government and media – in a kind of symbiosis with the terrorist acts it was intended to defeat – that prompted an outbreak of anti-Muslim street violence that is now a decade old. To adopt a popular metaphor we might therefore be describing a tipping-point: a point where racists feel licensed to inflict violence on Muslim victims who they connect to terrorism or extremism. We would resist such an analysis for two reasons: firstly because we are at an early stage of a long-term research study where far more empirical data needs to be examined before strong conclusions can be made; secondly because the preliminary evidence suggests that the gangs and individuals inflicting injuries on Muslims appear to be clear in their own minds that Muslims deserve to be attacked for exactly the same reasons they are admonished in sections of the mainstream media.

The archives of the Institute of Race Relations are valuable because they help to elicit patterns of institutional neglect towards minority victims of racist or xenophobic street

violence in the UK over the last fifty years.¹²⁸ Thus, when Kelso Cochrane became the first unofficially recorded murder victim of racist violence in contemporary Britain it was likely that his undetected young white assailants had the same pejorative views of their black victim's community as they read in some of the newspapers at the time.¹²⁹ Similarly, just as gangs who have more recently murdered Muslims in the UK may have found inspirational mainstream anti-Muslim bigotry in the media replicated on the websites of the British National Party (BNP) and the English Defence League (EDL) so too did Cochrane's murderers locate mainstream anti-Black bigotry in the nearby Notting Hill bookshop of the White Defence League (WDL), a forerunner of the BNP. Most worryingly, however, this comparison between a black victim of a racist murder in Notting Hill in 1959 and a number of Muslim murder victims of racist attacks in the UK in the last decade raise similar concerns about an institutional blind-spot.

In short, our report provides *prime facie* evidence to suggest that politicians, police chiefs and journalists in the UK have sometimes been reluctant to ascribe racist or anti-Muslim motivation to attacks on Muslims during the last decade. Our evidence does not go so far as to suggest that the problem is as severe as it was when politicians and journalists rushed to endorse an early police assessment ruling out a racial motivation in Cochrane's murder.¹³⁰ What it does reveal, however, is the extent to which the edicts of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry in 1999 concerning the investigation of racist attacks have often been difficult to implement when the victims have been Muslim and the motivation anti-Muslim to some extent or another.

It is therefore salutary to recall how Detective Superintendent Ian Forbes-Leith, leading the hunt for Cochrane's killers in 1959 told a newspaper: "We are satisfied that it was the work of a group of about six anti-law white teenagers who had only one motive in view – robbery or attempted robbery."¹³¹ Although, "much was made in the press of the fact that Kelso's wallet was empty", according to investigative journalist Raphael Rowe, "[Cochrane's] fiancée Olivia was clear in her statement that [Cochrane] had emptied it before leaving home that evening". Significantly, "the Sunday People also claimed [Cochrane] had been drinking, even though the pathologist ruled this out".¹³² Rowe accessed police archives which suggested the Home Office was anxious to play down the possibility of a racist motivation so as to reduce the risk of a 'race riot' in Notting Hill.¹³³ Nonetheless, according to Rowe's research, "many in the local community, both black and white, believed it was the first racist killing of a black man in modern Britain".¹³⁴

What can be assessed with absolute certainty is that the murder of Kelso Cochrane would have been investigated with vigour as a serious racist incident had it taken place in identical circumstances in London after the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry forty years later. Moreover, we have been struck by the number of unsolved serious assaults on Muslims and serious arson attacks on mosques that might have yielded successful prosecutions had they been afforded the same specialist expert investigative attention as was the case with the advent of the Racial and Violent Crimes Task Force in response to the Stephen Lawrence case. The same contrast is also valid in relation to victim support and the perspective of the victim generally. Muslim interviewees who have in the past been victims of racist violence – often 'Paki-bashing' – provide compelling evidence on this point.

In our research we have encountered numerous cases where there is a reluctance to ascribe Islamophobic or anti-Muslim sentiment as motivation for a violent attack on a Muslim – in whole or in part – in much the same way as happened in the Kelso Cochrane case. This is significant because in respect of minority ethnic victims there is no longer a reluctance to

identify racist motivation either amongst police chiefs, politicians or the media. The murder of Kamal Raza Butt will illustrate the point. Shortly after the 7/7 London bombings Kamal Raza Butt was beaten to death outside a corner shop by a gang of youths who shouted anti-Islamic abuse at him:

*Butt, 48, from Pakistan, was visiting Britain to see friends and family. On Sunday afternoon he went to a shop in Nottingham to buy cigarettes and was first called "Taliban" by the youths and then set upon.*¹³⁵

In the aftermath of 7/7 and for the remainder of 2005 researchers at the Institute of Race Relations (IRR) and researchers and case workers at the Islamic Human Rights Commission (IHRC) in London monitored and recorded an alarming increase in violent attacks on Muslims across the UK.¹³⁶ To varying degrees of effectiveness volunteers at the Forum Against Racism and Islamophobia (FAIR) and the Muslim Safety Forum (MSF), both organisations also based in London, were also able to observe the same phenomenon:

*Nottinghamshire police described the incident [Butt's murder] as racially aggravated, not as Islamophobic, angering Muslim groups and surprising some senior officers. Nottingham Police said it was not connected to a backlash against Muslims following the London bombings, which has seen mosques firebombed and Muslims attacked in the street. Superintendent Dave Colbeck, of Nottinghamshire police, said: "It would be inappropriate to comment on the possible motive... It is a localised incident and we are not looking at it as anything other than an isolated incident."*¹³⁷

In fact, just as Forbes-Leith was accused of playing down a racist motive in Cochrane's murder so as to reduce potential public order problems so too does Colbeck appear to be conflating motive and context for the same reason fifty years later. To suggest, as he does, that because Butt's death was "a localised incident" this somehow reduces the likelihood that the motive might be anti-Muslim or Islamophobic seems logically untenable. In any event when MSF volunteers met police at New Scotland Yard they expressed serious concern:

*The case was discussed at the Muslim Safety Forum, where senior police officers and Muslim community representatives meet. ...Azad Ali, who chaired the Muslim Safety Forum, said: "You can't class this as racist, there was no racist abuse shouted at him, it was Islamophobic....It is good the police have made arrests. We are disappointed that they have misclassified it, especially after all the advice to be more alert to Islamophobic hate crime."*¹³⁸

Why should the notion that Muslims are often attacked because they are Muslims be so difficult to understand? To help answer that question and provide context for this report we have asked Chris Allen to provide a personal account of engaging with the topic of Islamophobia since 1997.

4. Islamophobia: a personal journey - Chris Allen

It was shortly after the publication of the Commission on British Muslims & Islamophobia's (CBMI) report, *Islamophobia: a challenge for us all* that I first became aware of Islamophobia.¹³⁹ I was studying comparative religion with a focus on the religious landscape of the UK at the University of Wolverhampton and was looking for a subject to explore for my dissertation. When a friend passed me the report, not only did I find a topic that grabbed my attention but so too did I encounter something that I could not believe was not more widely known about. Why in British society were we allowing a situation where real people were being routinely prejudiced, discriminated and vilified just because of their religion or how they look? Why, more worryingly, were we allowing people to become victims of crime, abuse, assault and more without doing something about it?

In terms of the CBMI report, it was a watershed moment that brought about the formal recognition of Islamophobia in the social and political spaces of modern Britain. For me, it was a watershed moment that began a journey that I have now been travelling for over a decade.

Despite what has been a long and at times troubling journey, I still find myself asking the same questions. It failed to make sense in 1997 and it fails to make sense now. But one thing that does make sense is the fact that a decade and a half on and Islamophobia has not gone away.

Back in 1997, the report spoke of how 'Islamophobia' – "the shorthand way of referring to the dread or hatred of Islam – and, therefore, to fear or dislike all or most Muslims" – was necessitated by a new phenomenon that needed naming. In its opening pages, the report stated that "Islamophobic discourse, sometimes blatant but frequently coded and subtle, is part of everyday life in modern Britain". It went on, "in the last twenty years...the dislike [of Islam and Muslims] has become more explicit, more extreme and more dangerous".¹⁴⁰

Who back then would have been able to predict all that has occurred since? Who could have predicted the global impact of 9/11 or the impact of 7/7 here in the UK? Who could have predicted – not least as a response to both 9/11 and 7/7 – the unprecedented rise of the far-right in 21st century Britain and its securing of two seats in the European Parliament? Who could have predicted thousands of people marching through towns and cities across Britain behind banners stating 'Black and White unite against Islamic Extremism'?

Much has changed since 1997 but whether the debates about Islamophobia or the recognition of such an insidious phenomenon are any more informed or real than they were a decade ago, I remain unconvinced.

Having been at the forefront of researching Islamophobia since that journey began, I have worked with many organisations and institutions in an attempt to increase understanding and awareness of Islamophobia but to also try and work with them to find ways to eliminate not just Islamophobia but all forms of discrimination, hostility and hatred whether on the basis of religion, belief, race, ethnicity, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation or indeed anything else. In doing so I have had the privilege to work with, amongst others, the British Council, BRAP (a Birmingham-based equalities and human rights agency), the Centre for European Policy Studies, the Department for Communities & Local Government, the Equality & Human Rights Commission, the European Commission on Security Issues in Europe, the European Union Monitoring Centre on Racism & Xenophobia, Football Unites Racism Divides, the Forum Against Islamophobia & Racism, the Greater London Authority, the House of Lords Select Committee on Religious Offences, the Muslim Council of Britain, the Muslim Safety Forum, the National Association of Muslim Police, the National Muslim Women's Advisory Group, the Policy Research Centre, REWIND (an anti-racism organisation based in Sandwell) and the West Midlands Regional Observatory. Added to that list are various local authorities, statutory bodies, and community and grassroots organisations too many of whom it would be possible to list here.

But in working with so many good organisations and people along the way, I have repeatedly come across evidence – often routinely overlooked evidence – that Islamophobia is a very real and dangerous phenomenon. Yet still, I encounter people who claim that Islamophobia does not exist. In a programme for Channel 4 that I was interviewed for, Kenan Malik referred to Islamophobia as a 'myth'. During a debate I participated in at the European Parliament, Douglas Murray from the Centre for Social Cohesion described it as a 'crock'. For many more,

Islamophobia is little more than a means for Muslims to deflect unwanted criticism.

This is not my experience. One of the reasons for this lack of recognition is because, in my opinion, we have failed to adequately define and effectively communicate what Islamophobia is and as equally importantly, what Islamophobia is not. In some ways, this is not surprising. As Marcel Maussen puts it:

*Islamophobia groups together all kinds of different forms of discourse, speech and acts, by suggesting that they all emanate from an identical ideological core, which is an 'irrational fear' (a phobia) of Islam.*¹⁴¹

So let's start with what is not Islamophobia. Islamophobia is not about rightly condemning the handful of British Muslims who protested after the 7/7 attacks with shocking and despicable banners. Nor is it about rightly criticising the insensitivity of Islam4UK's planned march through Wootton Bassett. Categorically, neither of these are Islamophobic. It is not a shield to hide behind.

Instead, Islamophobia is the unfounded hatred of Muslims and Islam that manifests itself in such ways that ordinary British people are spat upon, shoved, verbally abused, discriminated against in the workplace, beaten up, have their houses graffitied and fire-bombed or even worse, are left paralysed or dead just because they are – or are seen to be – Muslim. Islamophobia does not restrict or constrain criticism or condemnation. But it does make the everyday experience of some Muslims in this country – and elsewhere – untenable.

The first time that I saw real evidence of this was when I was asked to co-author with Professor Jorgen Nielsen a report by the European Monitoring Centre for Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) shortly after the 9/11 attacks. Entitled *Summary Report on Islamophobia in the EU after 11 September 2001*, it remains the single largest monitoring project to have been undertaken into Islamophobia anywhere in the world.¹⁴² The findings from this research showed that across the breadth of the European Union (EU), Muslim and other vulnerable communities became routine targets of increased hostility and hatred after 9/11. Some of this was manifested in terms of physical violence but most was in the form of verbal abuse, harassment and aggression. Muslim women and those who were more 'visually' Muslim were the most likely victims whilst mosques and Islamic cultural centres were also widely targeted as were Islamic schools and Muslim-owned businesses.

In Britain, I noted how there was a clear backlash against Muslims being played out. Suggesting various reasons for this, the most prominent was the disproportionate amount of coverage being attributed to Muslims and Islam in the press and other media. More worrying though was the recognition that:

The far-right British National Party launched a highly explicit Islamophobic campaign. Drawing heavily on issues of the inability to co-exist with Islam, it reasserted Christianity as being under threat from Muslims in the UK. The BNP included isolated Sikh and Hindu voices in their campaign, despite these being denied by the wider respective communities.

Then, the BNP didn't have any seats on local councils, in the Greater London Assembly or in the European Parliament. Today they do. Then, they didn't have any non-white members. Today – apparently – they do. Despite the relative failure of the BNP in the general elections earlier this year, we must not allow this to make us forget or underestimate just how far the BNP and its message has come in less than ten years.

Since that research was undertaken, a similar picture has emerged from a variety of different sources. A few years later in 2005, a report for the Open Society Institute entitled

Muslims in the UK: policies for engaged citizens stated that “80% of Muslim respondents reported being subjected to Islamophobia”.¹⁴⁴

Two years after that, another report from the EUMC reiterated how in Britain:

*Muslims are vulnerable to discrimination and manifestations of Islamophobia in the form of anything from verbal threats through to physical attacks on people and property.*¹⁴⁵

In an accompanying report, it was worryingly suggested that far from improving in Britain, “...the situation had deteriorated over the last five years”.¹⁴⁶

Finalising my PhD at the University of Birmingham in 2006 where I studied the discourse of Islamophobia, I was approached soon after to work on a piece of research that had been commissioned by the Greater London Authority. Despite the report on its publication being used by some as a means of attacking the then Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone, I truly believe that the findings from my part of the report remain pertinent. Exploring how Muslims and Islam were being represented in the media in the wake of 7/7, the research was interesting for two key reasons. First, it evidenced the scale of the media’s focus on Muslims and Islam; second, it pointed to the detrimental impact this can have on the way in which people from different backgrounds relate to and get on with each other.

In terms of the scale of the problem, the report – entitled *The search for common ground: Muslims, non-Muslims and the UK media* – noted that in less than a decade, the number of stories and reports about Muslims or Islam in the British press had increased by around 270%.¹⁴⁷ In a week that was seen to be ‘normal’ – there were no major Muslim or Islam related stories – it was found that around 70% of that same coverage focused on Muslims or Islam as presenting a ‘threat’. Not just a run of the mill threat but one where:

*Muslims in Britain are depicted as a threat to traditional British customs, values and ways of life...[where] Facts are frequently distorted, exaggerated or oversimplified.*¹⁴⁸

As it went on, the impact of this would be that:

*...is likely to provoke and increase feelings of insecurity, suspicion and anxiety amongst non-Muslims...at the same time likely to provoke feelings of insecurity, vulnerability and alienation amongst Muslims...[it] is unlikely to help diminish levels of hate crime and acts of unlawful discrimination by non-Muslims against Muslims.*¹⁴⁹

In many ways, the reality of this impact was confirmed by the findings from the European Muslim Research Centre’s (EMRC) report into Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hate crimes in London published earlier this year when it noted that there was:

*...now prima facie and empirical evidence to demonstrate that assailants of Muslims are invariably motivated by a negative view of Muslims they have acquired from either mainstream or extremist nationalist reports or commentaries in the media...the major motivating factor for violence against Muslims is a negative and false belief that Muslims pose a security or terrorist threat.*¹⁵⁰

It seems that what I have been researching for more than a decade has now, because of the fact that it has been for so long overlooked, come to some fruition. And with this realisation I ask again, how has this happened?

Unlike other forms of discrimination – based on race, ethnicity, gender, disability etc – protecting against discrimination on the basis of religion in particular Islam and Muslimness has not been afforded the same importance over the past twenty or so years. The recent extending of the equalities framework to include ‘religion or belief’ through the Equality Act 2006 as well as the establishment of the Equality & Human Rights Commission whose remit includes monitoring religious discrimination are therefore welcome developments. But with the extending of protection for Muslims, Muslim communities have at the same

time been the central focus of the development and implementation of other legislation and policies: those that have sought to curtail and control radicalism, proscribe 'extremist groups', and introduce new offences that include 'acts preparatory to terrorism', 'encouragement to terrorism' and the 'dissemination of terrorist publications'. Not only has this had the effect of isolating and alienating Muslim communities, but so too has it both raised and reinforced fears and anxieties in wider society about Muslim cultures and traditions. Sadly, despite my research for the EUMC's 9/11 report having noted this back in 2002, we have failed to stop it from continuing and making the situation worse.

The ensuing report suggested the need for an 'information offensive' to be undertaken to promote and improve understanding of Islam, Muslims and Islamophobia. Although for me, it is questionable as to the extent to which 'Islam awareness' and other similar initiatives are or indeed have been able to counter Islamophobia. However, we do have to recognise and acknowledge that does appear to be a hardening of attitudes and perceptions about Muslims and Islam occurring in society.

According to this year's British Social Attitudes Survey, just over half the population believe that Britain is today deeply divided along religious lines. In addition, around 45% believe that religious diversity is having a negative impact on society.¹⁵¹ It is worth stressing that in stating these findings, none of these are necessarily Islamophobic or indeed anti-religious. However they are evidence of a hardening of attitudes, a situation that could be easily exacerbated by agitators to fuel Islamophobia and so become the catalyst for even further and deeper forms of hatred and violence. Changing attitudes and redressing misconceptions is therefore important but it is not a 'one size fits all' solution.

Instead, a more holistic approach is necessary, one that tackles wider processes and manifestations of exclusion, isolation and inequality. Key to this will be the need to utilise and commit to the equalities agenda, something that – may be understandably – some campaigning to tackle Islamophobia have bypassed. Equality is not only for those who come from a particular ethnic background, religion or have a disability for example: equality is for everyone. There can be no fair society if age, disability, gender, race, religion and belief, sexual orientation and transgender status are markers of disadvantage, and there can be no lasting or deep-rooted progress for disadvantaged groups unless we make a robust case for fairness which involves everyone in society.

But it is fair to say that equalities legislation could present some – including both Muslims and non-Muslims – with difficult challenges. This will be most prominent and contentious where the rights and equal treatment of those who may be seen to be 'sinful' or lesser because of a particular theological interpretation for instance, appears to contest, contend or be contrary to the beliefs and understandings of a religion or belief. However, if all agree that discrimination on the basis of religion or belief should be outlawed then so too must there be the same acknowledgement that all other forms of discrimination be outlawed too. Discriminate against or deny the rights of one person or group and it becomes much easier for the rights of others to be denied or to be discriminated against also, including one's own. The value of equalities therefore is that everyone is treated fairly and that all forms of discrimination including Islamophobia are afforded protection.

Equalities also provides a way into addressing the less visible forms of Islamophobia. By less visible forms of Islamophobia, I am referring to what might be best described as 'institutional Islamophobia'. Drawing upon the findings from the Macpherson Inquiry into the handling of the murder of Stephen Lawrence by the Metropolitan Police, the ensuing report spoke of

“the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin”, which “can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes, and behaviour, which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness, and racist stereotyping, which disadvantages minority ethnic people”. Replace the word ‘racist’ with ‘Islamophobic’ and the less visible forms of Islamophobia – those that impact socio-economically in terms of education, employment, housing and the provision of goods and services amongst others – become more apparent. So as before, whilst addressing attitudes and misconceptions are necessary, it is also necessary to look much wider and address the inequalities and socio-economic disadvantage that also exists.

If, as my journey hits the half way point of its second decade, Islamophobia and all its potential impacts, consequences and ramifications are not afforded the necessary and rightful importance now, then it is possible that this will continue to bring about deeper divisions, less cohesion, greater tensions and increased social unrest across Britain. The need to act now with speed, clarity, commitment and impartiality is long overdue.

A decade and a half on from the publication of the original CBMI report, and Islamophobia has still not gone away. Consequently, neither will my research – nor the research of a good many others including the European Muslim Research Centre – go away either.

5 European Muslim Identity - Myriam Francois-Cerrah

Today, the term “European Muslim identity” has become integrated into popular discourse in discussions on Muslim communities in Europe and is commonly heard in debates on topics such as integration, assimilation and even terrorism. Yet the term has only recently come to be accepted by both Muslims and non-Muslims as both accurate and intelligible. Although it might be argued that the Muslim presence in Europe dates back centuries, current discussions around this term refer specifically to the increasingly visible communities which tended to arrive after the Second World War following the need for an increased labour force in the 1950s, a need which began to recede in the 1970s. From the 1950s to the 1970s, the number of Muslim residents in European countries trebled.¹⁵² In 1999, there were an estimated 12-15 million¹⁵³ Muslims in Western Europe, while today there may be as many as 23 million.¹⁵⁴

The descendants of those immigrants were initially expected to conform to the assimilationist theory which assumed that through inter-marriage and socialization in national institutions (school, university, local clubs, etc), Muslims would gradually adopt the conception of national identity conceived by nations during periods of greater national homogeneity or when the voices of minority groups were not judged to be of equal value to those of the white majority. Assumptions of assimilation, namely that such communities would be desirous to embrace all aspects of the national culture uncritically, failed to be verified as Muslim communities continued to hold to their customs and traditions, causing a questioning of the assimilationist theory and the raising of debates over the right of minorities to contribute to definitions of national culture and identity. According to Jorgen Nielsen, “the fact we Europeans were reluctant to accept people who were different, except on our own terms has certainly contributed to Muslims’ assertion of their own distinctiveness in response”.¹⁵⁵ Tariq Ramadan points to the crucial role perceptions of Muslims in western societies have on the communities’ ability to think outside of a reactive and defensive mind-set: “...the manner in which Muslims in Europe are perceived and questioned puts them in a reactive and defensive

posture and this prevents them from producing an original and serene attitude".¹⁵⁶

In the midst of this reassessment of the place of Muslim communities in Europe and more specifically the extent of their right to contribute to national discourse on an equal footing with their non-Muslim counterparts, an internal discussion was also occurring within Muslim communities over how to define one's place in a minority setting. Although this was not the first time Muslims had been forced to deal with their minority status, the at times hostile reaction to Muslim communities led to reactive and defensive postures which reiterated the need to 'protect' Islam and in so doing, 'reject' the mainstream culture understood as potentially polluting it. Some chose to leave the faith behind altogether while others recoiled into insular communities fearful of the impact societies' multi-layered means of conveying its values – TV, advertising, music, etc – would have on their as yet un-clear identity. This attitude led to the preservation at times of cultural traditions which despite sometimes being at odds with the faith's rulings, would also be perpetuated.

As new generations emerged, increasingly disconnected from the culture of their parents and familiar with the European setting, the understanding of Islam as mere rules and prohibitions disconnected from their day to day reality was failing to offer substantive solutions to their reality. It is from this generation and from the converts which joined them, that an increasingly clear assertion of the existence of a European Muslim identity, at ease in the European context, but with a firm attachment to the faith, came to lay the foundations of today's concept.

In the UK, Abdullah Quilliam's 'The Crescent' newspaper is often referred to as marking the emergence of a distinctly British Muslim community. Run by and featuring mostly British converts to the faith, the paper spoke to the needs of the nascent Liverpool community in the late 19th, early 20th century, and offered concrete solutions to its needs. Abdullah Quilliam himself is often heralded as an early British example, having been loyal to both Crown and Caliph, he was appointed Sheikh-ul-Islam of the British Isles by Sultan Abdul Hamid II in 1893 and would integrate dua's (prayers) to Edward II in the Friday prayers he led. Other well known converts have followed in his footsteps, blending a distinctly British outlook with the Islamic ethos, such as Charles Le Gai Eton, Professor Timothy Winters, Yahya Birt (Blog: Musings from the Britannic Crescent) and others, and important publications have fostered this nascent identity, including *emel* magazine, founded by British convert Sarah Joseph, *Q-news* and a host of satellite channels.

Yet, while lay-individuals have increasingly made their voices heard on scholarly matters, scholars, the figures of authority who were able to provide context specific solutions to the day to day issues faced by Muslims back home, were often overwhelmed by the European context, lacking the linguistic, cultural and often educational tools necessary to address the new issues facing the community. Increasingly disconnected from the younger community, their solutions seemed out-of touch with young people's reality and the key questions they faced lay unaddressed or poorly addressed by those who held the link to the traditional body of Islamic knowledge.

It is in the midst of this struggle to find a balance between the demands of the Western context and the obligations of religious identity, which the impact of Professor Tariq Ramadan's ideas must be understood.

Born in Geneva, of Egyptian descent, Tariq Ramadan has emerged as the leading theoretician on issues of European Muslim identity. His combination of Western academic knowledge – he has a PhD in Philosophy from the University of Geneva – combined with a

strong background in Islamic studies, gleaned from an intense period of study at Al-Azhar University in Cairo, means he integrates secular and religious knowledge in a way many scholars had been unable to grasp. This ability to grasp both the “text” and the “context” would lead him to develop a call in 2009 for a “radical reform”¹⁵⁷ in which he called on scholars of the text, the ulama, to come together with scholars of the ‘context’, secular experts, to produce *ijtihad* which could grapple with the complexities of the modern era.

Ramadan has been a driving force behind an attempt to foster an autonomous perception of Muslim identity in the West which is not filtered through the prism of other civilizations or their perception of Islam and which emphasises the fact Muslim identity is neither rigid nor fixed, but constantly evolving based on a dialectic movement between the source texts and the environment: “By having a clear awareness of their identity, a new sentiment will grow, based on a more rooted self-confidence, and this will enable them to realise that their presence can be positive, that they can provide Europe with more spirituality, and a greater sense of justice and brotherhood along with a greater involvement in solidarity”¹⁵⁸. As part of his reasoning on the development of European Muslim identity, Ramadan established a typology of six tendencies which can be found throughout Europe today in an attempt to develop a more sophisticated and accurate understanding of its Muslim population.

The first trend, dubbed “Scholastic traditionalism”, involves a close attention to the core texts and a strict adherence to the schools of jurisprudential thought (Maliki, Hanbali, Shafi and Hanafi), most of the elaboration of which was undertaken between the 8th and 11th century and with no recourse to independent reasoning (*ijtihad*). Examples include the Jama’at Tabligh, the Barelwis or Ahl al Sunna.

The second type is “Salafi traditionalism” which rejects both the mediation of schools of law and of the ulama, taking direct inspiration from the earliest generations of Islam. It is distinguished through its strict attention to the literal meaning of the text without interpretation, viewed as a heretical innovation and to a continuing attachment to the binary division between Dar al-Harb and Dar al-Islam.

Whilst both the first two types limit participation in the European setting, albeit on different grounds, the third type “Salafi reformism” seeks to find answers to respond to the issues posed by the new setting. This type shares the focus of “Salafi traditionalism” on the earliest generations of Islam, but focuses more on the aims and objectives of the law and jurisprudence and places a strong importance on *ijtihad* in the continuous elaboration of relevant *fiqh* (jurisprudence). This current draws influence from the developments in Islamic thinking in the end of the 19th, early 20th century through figures such as Al Afghani, Mohamed Abdu, Rashid Rida, Iqbal, al Banna, Mawduddi, Shariati and others and which arrived in Europe during the repression of reformist salafi figures in many post-independence states. According to Tariq Ramadan, this trend is “widely diffused” in the West and many organisations and groups draw on its method of reading the texts.

The fourth trend is “political and literalist salafiya”, which Ramadan regards as the other product of the post-independence repression throughout the Islamic world. Originally inspired by the reformist trend, this type moved to an almost exclusive focus on the political which was then allied to a literalist reading of the texts, resulting in a revolutionary, radical outlook which opposes the West. Examples in Europe include Hizb ut-Tahrir and al Muwahhidun.

The fifth trend identified is “liberal reformism” which emerged out of the colonial period and which sought to apply European experience of secularism in the Islamic world. It continues to advocate a strong public-private divide on the issue of religion and argues for

placing Reason above revelation, particularly in areas where there is deemed to be conflict with modern norms.

The final trend is “Sufism”, a diverse group which encompasses Naqshbandis, Qadiris, Shadhilis and others who focus on the mystical or spiritual relationship to God, over the scriptural, though they are not viewed as mutually exclusive. These groups function as ‘brotherhoods’ (turuq) with a strict hierarchy and emphasise meditation and reflection. These are often allied to social and community work and sometimes have links to networks in Muslim majority countries.

Tariq Ramadan’s typology explores the diversity of European Islamic trends and highlights the historical roots of contemporary modes of textual understanding within the European context. Grandson of Egyptian revivalist leader Hassan al-Banna, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, Tariq Ramadan was born and raised in Europe, and has extensive experience of Muslim communities across Europe and the West. His seminal book *To be a European Muslim* set out an innovative and systematic framework for applying the resources of the mainstream tradition to the European context as early as 1999, long before the widespread calls for reform ignited with 9/11. According to Jorgen Nielsen, “Dr Ramadan has provided us with the first major attempt to apply this process to the situation of Muslims in Europe,”¹⁵⁹ drawing on the key concepts of ‘maqasid’ (the objective) and *masalih* (interests) which have become popularised in Muslim majority countries to address contemporary developments. Although there is by no means consensus¹⁶⁰ on either the definition or use of *al-maslaha* as a juridical tool, the strict framework of imam al-Shatibi, a scholar from Granada, has been widely recognised as legitimate in tackling new situations faced within the western context, on which the source texts are silent.

The notion of *maslaha* or ‘public interest’, might be described as “the preservation of the objective (maqсад) of the Law (shar’) which consists of five things: the preservation of Religion, life, reason, descendants and property”.¹⁶¹ The notion has served to complement the textual sources in the elaboration of responses to issues not directly or explicitly addressed by them as a supplementary source of legislation. For Ramadan and other advocates of the notion, it is viewed as an important tool in the formulation of new “rational rulings directed by Revelation”.¹⁶²

Ramadan’s approach has been to highlight to Muslim communities the extent to which “there is no European constitution which is anti-Islamic per se,” whilst also tackling the perception internalised by some Muslims that they are indeed the ‘problem’ some Western commentators have described, leaving many feeling that Muslims had little to offer the European landscape. He has also challenged the importance afforded to some of the more prickly issues negotiated by Muslim communities, such as mosques, food or cemeteries, emphasising the faith’s central message and values above particular exigencies whilst encouraging active engagement of Muslims as full citizens. Instead he has sought to clarify the core tenets of the faith and the necessary tools which would allow Muslims to develop country specific solutions to the issues they face, with a specific and appropriate actualisations of these processes. Moreover he clarified the responsibilities Muslims have to their nations, to make a positive contribution grounded in their faith, emphasising the two way process of having one’s rights respected while giving back to one’s community in a process of civic engagement.

Among the core concepts underpinning his framework are the assumption of permissibility, namely that all things are permissible unless they have clearly been prohibited, challenging

widely held assumptions that all that came from Western culture was necessarily anti-Islamic. This allowed Muslims to accept and appropriate “what, within every civilization and culture, does not contradict clearly stipulated juridical prescriptions”,¹⁶³ as Islamic and specifically eased interaction with popular Western cultural mediums such as music, theatre, cinema, etc by suggesting clear criteria through which to evaluate its output.

Drawing on Faysal Mawlawi’s work, he also questioned the classical distinction between “Dar al-Harb” and “Dar al-Islam” devised during the third century of Islam, pointing to its limited validity in the modern context and the need to reassess the categories in light of modern geographical and political realities, suggesting the possibility of re-classifying the West as the ‘space of Shahada’ or testimony,¹⁶⁴ a space where Muslims can bear testimony to their faith by informing people of their beliefs. He also outlined what he dubbed the five constituents which allow the blossoming of the Muslim personality, namely faith and the ability to live out one’s spirituality, the ability to practise one’s religion, protection for one’s rights, freedom to explain and express one’s faith and participation in social affairs as an actualisation of faith and highlighted the presence of laws within Europe which already guarantee these rights.

He also tackled head on alleged conflicts between Muslim and national identity, the question often posed as “what are you first, Muslim or British/French/German?”, pointing to the complementarity of the two markers of identity, the first relating to the metaphysical or existential level, while the latter relates to the worldly realm, regulating relations between the citizen and the state. He also distinguished between core issues in which conflict may occur, in which Muslims may appeal to the clause of conscience (unjust wars, forced participation in un-Islamic economic transactions, etc), and peripheral or less central issues (school, education, burial, etc) which would require a process of negotiation between Muslims and the state, but which are not viewed as shaking the foundations of Islamic identity.

Within the nascent European community, Tariq Ramadan has played an unquestionably leading role in the development of new modes of thinking about Muslim identity, influencing new generations of Muslims from France to Holland via the UK and Belgium. His influence on the coming generation of European Muslims and the impact of his thinking on their outlook can hardly be over-estimated. Engaged in projects across Europe, from the European Muslim Network, a Brussels-based think-tank, to a former position as professor of Identity and Citizenship at Erasmus University in Rotterdam and ever present on the French stage, whether as a guest on mainstream talk-shows or lecturing in community halls, he is currently Chair of Islamic Studies at Oxford University and has written over twenty books which have been translated in numerous languages. With strong links to the grass-roots communities but also fully committed to incorporating the wisdom gleaned there into government and supra-national bodies, he represents one of the most respected, influential and inspiring figures to Europe’s young generation of Muslims and is without doubt a pioneer in the development of a confident, articulate and positive European Muslim identity.

6. Media Portrayal of Muslim Women - Fatima Khan

As a general rule the mainstream media in the UK rarely reports a positive story about strong women wearing the hijab. Media stories in my experience have nearly always been negative surrounding scandal, abuse or focused on just how timid and oppressed the hijab/niqab wearing population are.

Working and coming into contact regularly with Muslim women who wear hijab or



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The Daily Mail article is just one example of poor journalism on this topic, working hard to keep up the picture of the ‘poor Muslim girl’ forced to lead a double life should she be brave enough to break away from the cycle of Muslim repression and oppression.

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niqab, I have met many extraordinary individuals who are strong minded, courageous, beautiful women who proudly wear 'Islamic dress', from both traditional and non-traditional perspectives. I have yet to come across any of these women in the media. Perhaps not entirely unsurprising as positive stories or portrayals of Muslim women may not be seen as newsworthy.

A recent story, in the Daily Mail (July 30th 2010) caught my attention and fits the stereotype.¹⁶⁵ The story was on 'hymenoplasty' which is surgical procedure also known as the 'virginity repair' operation. According to the article, the biggest users of the operation are Muslim women. This article seemed to be a follow on from an article published by the Daily Mail in November 2007. Interestingly enough, although there was a three year gap in writing of the two articles, the same consultant Dr Magdy Hend was used as a source both times. It would have been good to have seen what other consultants in the country were saying about the use of this procedure or indeed a quote from the NHS. What the articles also failed to mention both times was that many women opting for the procedure also came from other faiths, notably Christians, Jews and Hindus. Another fact omitted from the article was that many other western women were also going under the knife for the same surgical procedure purely out a personal lifestyle choice.

The Daily Mail article is just one example of poor journalism on this topic, working hard to keep up the picture of the 'poor Muslim girl' forced to lead a double life should she be brave enough to break away from the cycle of Muslim repression and oppression. I spoke to a number of professional Muslim women on the topic of media portrayal of Muslim women and how they felt about articles such as one on hymen repair.

The women I spoke to for the purpose of this article, Muslim and non-Muslim felt the media should take some responsibility for contributing to the anti-Muslim sentiments and hate crimes taking place in the UK. They also felt it to be extremely important to make the media accountable especially when it has the clear capabilities of causing long term damage. If more positive stories are put out into the public domain then it would serve to put right the balance a bit more. It is not to say that Muslim women have not been abused in the name of religion or in many countries not been given the same privileges available to their male counterparts. But it would also be fair to say that abuse of women is not a simply a Muslim phenomena, and neither is it something which is tolerated in Islam.

Just doing a simple google search using the words 'Muslim woman' will bring up numerous articles on Muslim women, news from around the globe, news all fairly negative about how women are forced to wear the headscarf or the veil. Articles on Muslim women will have a woman, often a model, wearing a niqab simply because the article is either about a Muslim woman or about Muslims in general and apparently warrants a close up picture of a non-Muslim woman wearing the veil!

There also seems to be the sweeping judgement by popular opinion, continually fuelled by biased media stories, that given the choice no Muslim woman would freely wear the hijab or niqab. Any religion that requests such of its women must surely be archaic and oppressive and in need updating. Why then do so many women choose to cover themselves out of their own free will? I would not be so naive as to think all women in Islam cover out of their own choice, there are of course exceptions as with anything. The answer from jaundiced and ill-informed journalists is often to suggest such women are suffering from a kind of 'Stockholm syndrome'.

Of course, the media should be able to highlight issues such as unfair treatment, forced

marriages, honour based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) amongst many issues still facing Muslim women today. Topics such as these should be tackled and brought out to the surface to debate and solutions sought, but it should also be explained that these kind of practices have a cultural root and have no foundation within Islam.

I asked a number of Muslim women how they felt about the media portrayal of Muslim women and have captured some of their thoughts of this issue in their own words:

There are two extremes that the media portray and no middle ground. Either they are suppressed women, stay at home mothers, no rights, victimized by their male folk or they are outspoken feminist bashing hijab wearing ninjas who are angry and keep talking to the media about rights and justice... tiring. How about the women in hijabs that aren't like this? How about the majority who are normal...

We are oppressed and that the main focus always goes back to our dress code... It's getting kind of tired and they need to look at fresh angles of how we contribute overall as a sister, wife and mother.

Stereotyped as illiterate, uneducated, repressed, oppressed, depressed, shy, frumpy, do not like to interact, cannot speak English, in need of being liberated! Basically all the negative nonsense we're always trying to disprove!! Hardly ever anything positive that will question and break the mould. Non-hijabis arguably portrayed as more liberated, professional and free.

'Normal' – is there such a thing when it comes to a Muslim woman? Are the words Muslim and woman the paradox that once coined together means normality has left the building?

The perception seems to be this: Muslim women who do not wear the headscarf, but are in the media – for example in the Apprentice TV series – are not really Muslim. They are viewed to be quite simply as Asian women. However, they are also perhaps seen to be more accessible and when needed can be also be used in a tokenistic gesture to capture views of Muslim women. It may be that Muslim women who cover are too daunting to approach or the stereotypes are so ingrained that it seems not necessary as one can just presume what those views maybe.

Honour based violence is an issue that does affect the Muslim community and a debate that should be had more widely to tackle the practice of such a hideous act in the name of 'honour'. The Islamic stand on taking of a life is very clear:

If you take one life it is as though you have taken the life of all humanity. If you save one life it is as though you have saved the life of all humanity.

But once again the media tends to zone in on the Muslim angle when reporting the horrific stories of women being murdered. A few of the articles I came across included:

- UK Muslim Honour Killing; Wife & Daughters Burner Alive
- Honour killings of Four Muslims Girls in Canada
- Toulay Goren.. the Muslim Schoolgirl Murdered by her father..

Honour killings are a global problem and there does seem to be trends and patterns which leads back to Muslim countries and communities. However, violence against women is not something that only Muslim women suffer. Similar crimes in the west, when a woman is murdered by a jealous husband or lover is cited in the media under 'crimes of passion'.

Using different terms in different cultures does not take away from the fact that violence against women is an age old problem that needs to be continually tackled, discussed and brought out of the 'taboo' range of topics for many communities to make perpetrators accountable for their heinous actions. Muslim men and women in my opinion welcome the

debate on tackling honour based violence in the context of not being an attack on Islam but the exposure of the society and cultures that condone and give root to such practices.

There needs to be some redress taking place in the media on the portrayal of Muslim women. Where a story is clearly nothing to do with religion, then the individual/ s faith should be left out. The media should be made to feel more accountable to report accurately and where this has not been done, they should be challenged. However, not everyone knows how to challenge the media or if making a complaint can make a difference, this seems to be an ongoing issue. There is also a responsibility on Muslim women to speak up and be counted on issues concerning women and not wait for others to face the gauntlet alone.

The issue of media portrayal of Muslim women will not disappear in the near future but it can move towards being more open minded and unprejudiced, especially if there is a willingness to learn and understand before casting judgement

7. Short Tales of the Hijab - Naima Bouteldja

“Is it true that there are loads of swimming pools in London just for women?”¹⁶⁶ Karima, a young mother visibly amused, asked during one of my recent stays in Paris. A couple of years earlier, aided and abetted by some female friends, she had persuaded the owner of a private Parisian swimming pool to grant the women access for a couple of weekly swimming sessions. By carefully approaching a businessman the young women thought they had ensured themselves against the kind of public outcry which erupts in France every time a journalist or a politician with a craving for publicity reveals that a municipal swimming pool has outrageously granted women-only sessions to Muslim or Jewish women or to those who simply prefer to swim without men around. But the local authorities soon got wind of the affair and pressure from the local Mayor put an end to the women’s short-lived enjoyment – no more swimming treats for hijabis, in the name of *laïcité* (secularism), in the name of the fight against communitarianism (self-segregation), in the name of gender equality and who knows maybe even in the name of the war on terror...

Karima was still a child when in 1989 the first *Affaire du Foulard*¹⁶⁷ sparked a full-scale political crisis, but she still has vivid memories of the second wave of controversy, which engulfed France in 1994. Then a talented student in her fourth year of secondary school, a few months before the crisis broke, Karima chose to wear the hijab. The fact that the law proscribing religious symbols in state schools was adopted some ten years later in March 2004 did not deter the school from (illegally) expelling her. But it was neither her truncated schooling nor the prospect of being able to freely swim that determined her to leave behind Paris to settle in London. Rather it was the umpteenth media and political onslaught against the veil, the last of which was launched by a communist MP in June 2009. The motion by André Gerin and an assortment of MPs¹⁶⁸ preceded an incoherent state-sponsored debate on national identity and eventually in September 2010¹⁶⁹ led to a law barring the wearing of the ‘*voile intégral*’ (niqab/burqa) in public spaces, despite the latter being worn by a tiny minority of Muslim women¹⁷⁰.

As with many other French, Belgian or German Muslims we met during the project, Karima conceives England as one of the rare Western countries where it is possible for a Muslim to practice their faith freely while tasting the comforts and relative freedoms that European societies can still offer. One of the most striking images many Europeans belonging to a cultural or religious minority see after landing in London for the first time, whether from Paris, Brussels or Berlin, is of custom officers wearing turbans, hijabs and similar garb. This

apparent accommodation of cultural and religious diversity is publicly displayed on billboards at Britain's airports and train stations and even where one would least expect it; inside the British police force.

Short Tales of the Hijab, an hour long documentary, was born out of the numerous discussions I had with Fatima Ali, a young French Iraqi theatre director, about the distinctive approaches European societies have towards post-colonial immigrants and their descendants, in particular those of Muslim faith. While comparisons between the French "colour blind" and assimilationist Republican model and the British "multicultural"¹⁷¹, race relations-based one, have been studied and debated with growing urgency in academic and political circles¹⁷², particularly after 2005's three weeks long revolt of the banlieues in France and the 7/7 bombings in London, curiously very few documentaries have been dedicated to the issue.

Being aware of the difficulties arising in attempting an exhaustive coverage of all the issues affecting Muslim communities in two, let alone four, European societies we approached the question through the prism of the hijab. The decision seemed logical given our familiarity with the subject¹⁷³, and because over the last couple of decades probably no other social phenomenon has better illustrated the contrasting responses of British and French mainstream societies to a minority issue common to both countries. Not that the hijab affair is symptomatic of the differences between the two models of integration but it is reflective of the way both countries approach the expression of religious diversity, when it particularly concerns Muslims, and ultimately the freedom to practice one's religion in the public sphere, a key concern for Muslim women.

Britain and France were, of course, not the only European countries affected by the issue. As a consequence of the French debates, the hijab became a national obsession in several European countries and is now banned in most Belgium schools while teachers are forbidden to wear it in schools throughout several German states. In this sense the hijab controversies are an excellent tool to compare and contrast the treatment of Muslim communities in respective European societies.

But the main factor which ultimately persuaded us to use the hijab as the central theme of a documentary dealing with the presence of Muslims in four key European countries is our belief that the hijab and more recently the niqab/burka have been exploited as an smokescreen not only to distract the general public from unpopular reforms, discredited governments and/or social and economic crises, but also to avoid addressing head-on the general uneasiness at the increasing visibility and assertiveness of Muslim communities in Western societies; a discomfort made more acute by an international economic recession and a global context which increasingly over the past decade has depicted Islam as the new bogeyman.¹⁷⁴ The hijab affair, like the Minaret controversy in Switzerland is therefore also a metaphor for the irremediable presence of Muslim communities in Europe, and perceived in this way it is unsurprising that these debates, while concerning an extremely marginal number of women/mosques, have framed the Muslim communities as a threat to national harmony and identity.

When we began making the documentary although the recent controversy around the niqab and burqa had already hit the headlines in the French media we initially decided to push the affair to one side. Having witnessed and studied the political mechanisms of the hijab controversies¹⁷⁵ we genuinely believed that this diversionary trick, recycled for the niqab debate, against a backdrop of plunging markets, rising unemployment, popular strike action and detested pension reforms was too outrageous to be swallowed by the general public. We were also convinced that in the unlikely event of the bill being voted through by the

French National Assembly and Senate, the law banning the veil in public places would be deemed unconstitutional by the State Council. Not only were we proven wrong on all counts, but between the beginning of the controversy and the adoption of the law by the French government, several European countries had joined the fray including Britain⁷⁶ and Belgium, the latter finding time even in the midst of a severe constitutional crisis, which led to the collapse of its government, to vote through a law banning the veil in the lower chamber.

So the public controversy surrounding the full veil, which we believe fulfils the same social and political role as previous controversies have over Muslim women's dress codes, appeared to justify our initial choice for the subject of the documentary.

While England and France were two obvious countries to film in, we also turned our attention to Belgium as the first country in Europe whose Parliament voted for a niqab ban and to Germany, host to a large and established Muslim community,⁷⁷ but also in recent times witness to the first murder of a hijabi woman, Marwa el-Sharbini, a 31 year old Egyptian who was tragically murdered in front of her three year old son and her husband, in a Dresden courtroom in July 2009.

Beyond mapping the key issues and the main characters involved on both sides of the debate *Short tales of the hijab* is also aimed at bridging the yawning chasm between the perceptions of Muslim women shrouded in media and political scare stories and the multiple and dynamic identities of Muslim women living in modern European societies. For this purpose, we have travelled to a number of European cities to follow four hijabi main characters from different generations and backgrounds and have interviewed key actors who have helped us unravel the politics of the veil and contextualise each national reality. Shot against contrasting backdrops, from the medieval forms of a French historical town, the deadening banlieues of France, the beautiful architecture of Dresden and the bustle of London's busy transport system, we have filmed the lives of these women through their work, activities and personal stories; their struggles portrayed as living testimonies against the stereotypical roles assigned to Muslim women in popular culture and politics.

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167. "The headscarf affair" came to national prominence in 1989 after three young girls were expelled from their school in Creil, near Paris, for wearing headscarves.
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169. On the eve of Bastille Day, July 2010, the French National Assembly voted for the bill by a majority of 335 votes to 1 followed by another emphatic majority of 246 to 1 in the French Senate in September 2010, and by the State Council's approbation in October 2010. The law will be implemented in April 2011.
170. As with the hijab, the niqab/burqa similarly relates to an extremely small percentage of Muslim women. In France during 2003 – one year before it was banned in schools – the hijab was, according to official sources, only worn by 1250 schoolgirls out of the 10 million students who attended French state schools that year, while in mid 2009 it was estimated that the burqa or niqab was worn by approximately 2000 women in the whole of France (an earlier estimate put the numbers at a surreal 367!)
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174. See Samuel Huntingdon's *The Clash of Civilisations and the Remaking of World Order*, (2002).
175. This tactic, deconstructed by numerous French and foreign academics and journalists, often starts with a public statement by a prominent European politician or media figure – be it Theo van Gogh, Geert Wilders or Rita Verdonk in the Netherlands, Jacques Chirac or President Sarkozy in France or Jack Straw in the UK – on a marginal issue, which in turn leads to a blizzard of political and media stories, conveniently diverting attention away from unpopular government policies or a social crisis.
176. Although Britain was no stranger to the hijab and veil debate, as illustrated by the remarks of the former Foreign Secretary Jack Straw in 2006, it is the latest round of controversies in France over the niqab which seemed to have had the most negative impact, sparking a myriad of stories in the UK press from 'burqa bandits', and opinion polls backing a public ban to vitriolic opinion pieces by the likes of cultural critic Yasmin Alibhai-Brown and feminist Joan Smith demanding a ban on the niqab/burqa. In July 2010 Conservative MP Philip Hollobone introduced a private members bill – Face Coverings (Regulation) Bill – in the House of Commons as an attempt to ban the veil. However, the Conservative Party hierarchy distanced itself from his call, Damian Green (minister for immigration) declaring a ban to be "unBritish" and "undesireable". See Champion of UK burka ban declares war on veil wearing constituents, Andrew Grice, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/champion-of-uk-burka-ban-declares-war-on-veilwearing-constituents-2028669.html> and Copying French ban on burqa would be un-British, says minister, Allegra Stratton, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2010/jul/18/burqa-ban-unbritish-immigration-minister>.
177. The Muslim population of Germany is estimated at around 3.3.2 million, nearly 3.9% of the entire German population. France is estimated to have the largest Muslim population in the European Union numbering between 5 and 6 million (around 9% of the total population), while according to the 2001 national census approximately 1.6 million Muslims live in the UK, consisting of around 3% of the population.

“

Our research reveals a disturbing number of reported and unreported hate crimes in which Muslim women wearing hijabs, niqabs or burkas have been assaulted, abused and intimidated. These incidents have taken place in public places – streets, shopping centres, on trains and on buses – invariably in view of passers-by and onlookers who have generally not intervened to help or defend the victims.

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towards Aldgate
or Liverpool Street
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N253

Socialist Socialism
**THE THE BNP
IS A NAZI
PARTY -
SMASH
THE THE BNP**
Unemployment are not caused by immigrants
Unemployment & debt are not caused by immigrants

**EDL
+ BNP
= First Nazi
1933**

**NO RACIS
AND
ASCISM**



Part Two

Anti-Muslim Hate-Crime

8. Anti-Muslim hate crime

This part of the report presents research findings in relation to intimidation and violence experienced by members of Muslim communities in the UK. It is based on over twelve months close engagement with Muslim communities in the UK by a small team of researchers. In addition some of the researchers have been engaged with the issue during the preceding decade.

For us anti-Muslim hate crime, a term we adopted in our London case study report, best describes a significant number of violent attacks on Muslims and their places of worship and congregation in the UK. We were remiss in our London case study to underestimate the ongoing menace of racist violence on UK streets which of course also impacts adversely on the vast majority of Muslims. That said, having now interviewed numerous Muslim victims of street violence in towns and cities across the UK we have become even more convinced that anti-Muslim hate crime more accurately describes the experience that most of them have had.

Our main point is that the established term Islamophobia as well as the associated terms Islamophobic hate crime, Islamophobic incident, as well as religiously aggravated crime and racist hate crime posit the need for an anti-religious or racist motivation on the part of an assailant that is often lacking or not immediately apparent from an evidential point of view. Indeed, according to our research, several cases where a suspect might have been successfully charged and prosecuted for a religiously aggravated offence or racially aggravated offence have been lost because the investigators failed to discern an anti-Muslim motivation. In many other cases clear anti-Muslim sentiment has been ignored by investigators in favour of a less apparent racist motivation. Whether such outcomes are legislative or investigative failings is unclear and probably varies on a case by case basis.

To clarify, Muslims we have interviewed who have been physically injured in the course of violent assaults by unknown assailants – assailants who have expressed their antipathy to their victims as ‘terrorists’ or in related terms during the course of the assaults – are best described as being victims of anti-Muslim hate crime. In a majority of cases the victims know why they were attacked having been told by their assailants in no uncertain terms. It is, moreover, highly plausible and logically consistent that their attackers are motivated by a negative view of Muslims as ‘terrorists’ or ‘terrorist sympathisers’ in a way that has become common coinage since 9/11. It is less clear that motivation in cases of this kind involves hatred or fear of Islam per se in the way that Islamophobia was seminally conceived by the Runnymede Trust before 9/11 and in the way that legislators appear to have conceived it when framing responsive legislation.

For example, in our research into the English Defence League’s (EDL) campaign of intimidation against ‘radical’ Muslim organisations and mosques their rationale is far more commensurate with an analysis of an existential ‘Islamist threat’ conceived by Rumsfeld-

Cheney and adopted by Bush-Blair to drive the war on terror. This link to a pejorative use of the term Islamist underpins two key research findings: (i) the incidence of anti-Muslim hate crimes in the UK runs parallel with the war on terror and (ii) a view of Muslims as ‘terrorists’ or ‘terrorist sympathisers’ appears to be a motive or partial motive in many cases of anti-Muslim hate crime.

While each case of violence against a Muslim, a mosque, an Islamic institution or a Muslim organisation should be judged on its individual merits to ascertain its motivation it is nevertheless helpful to provide broad typologies to help categorise them. In many instances it would take a detailed psychiatric investigation in respect of an individual offender to arrive at a full understanding of the complexity of factors that often combine to motivate the crime. As a rule, however, it is generally accepted that criminal motivation is as an offender conceives and expresses it. This is especially true in cases of political violence where the criminal act is predicated on an intention to communicate its purpose and the political cause it supports or opposes. That is the basis on which we categorise our research findings and present, first and foremost, what we have chosen to call terrorism and ‘political violence against Muslims’.

9. Terrorism and political violence against Muslims

Terrorism and political violence against Muslims is our deliberate and considered choice of description for a range of serious threats faced by Muslim communities in the UK as elsewhere in Europe. In a fundamental way it challenges the received wisdom and the preferred language of the UK government.

9.1 Conceiving terrorism and political violence

Just as terrorism and political violence inspired or directed by al-Qaeda is unrepresentative of the Muslim communities it purports to defend, so too terrorism and political violence aimed at Muslims and inspired by extremist nationalist groups is unrepresentative of the indigenous communities where it seeks legitimacy and support. Similarly although both kinds of terrorist threat are serious in the UK neither one is likely to impact directly on the lives of the overwhelming majority of UK citizens and residents. However, as Alex Schmid makes perfectly clear, it is axiomatic that terrorism and political violence are always tactics used by a very small minority to communicate their purpose to a large majority or to those political elites in or close to power:

Terrorism cannot be understood only in terms of violence. It has to be understood primarily in terms of propaganda. Violence and propaganda, however, have much in common. Violence aims at behaviour modification by coercion. Propaganda aims at the same by persuasion. Terrorism can be seen as a combination of the two. Terrorism, by using violence against one victim, seeks to coerce and persuade others. The immediate victim is merely instrumental, the skin on a drum beaten to achieve a calculated impact on a wider audience.

To a large extent the threat of violence towards Muslims from violent extremist nationalists in the UK is a conceptually and tactically flawed response to the al-Qaeda threat. Significantly, where the two threats differ sharply is in terms of government responses. The al-Qaeda related threat has been the subject of vast, unprecedented expenditure over the last decade and yet it has not diminished. In contrast, the threat of terrorism and political violence to Muslim communities and other minority communities from violent extremist nationalists has grown steadily, virtually unremarked and barely featured as a government policy interest. Our aim is to encourage government and parliament to begin to redress that imbalance. Apart from an

overriding duty of public safety government might also recognise an additional moral duty having unwittingly fuelled both kinds of threat by recourse to the practice and language of the war on terror over a long period.

As those charged with the onerous responsibility of planning public safety before and during the Olympic Games in 2012 will be acutely aware threats of political violence from a diverse extremist nationalist milieu are every bit as credible as those that fall under an al-Qaeda umbrella. Set as it is in the heart of the UK's largest concentration of Muslim communities the Olympic Games might easily be a target for both kinds of political extremist threat. Strategic public safety planners will not need reminding how terrorist threats at previous Olympic Games have sometimes been wrongly ascribed to competing kinds of terrorist groups prior to investigation. Moreover, the risks of misreporting – and the adverse impact on local communities – only increases with the insatiable demands of 'breaking news' media expectations.

Therefore, when assessing violent extremist nationalist plans to kill and maim Muslims in the UK with nail bombs and other improvised explosive devices it is insufficient to conceive and respond to them purely as hate-crimes. These are invariably acts of terrorism or political violence and should be treated with the urgency and priority the government normally attaches to such crimes. Moreover, given that identical tactics are described by the UK government as acts of terrorism when they are adopted by violent extremists inspired by al-Qaeda then it is perverse to classify or respond to them differently when Muslims are the target of attack. It also follows that if al-Qaeda inspired terrorism warrants a multi-agency nationwide counter-terrorism strategy that includes a strand in which community based projects seek to prevent young people becoming al-Qaeda terrorists or supporters then the same resources should be deployed to tackle extremist nationalist terrorism and to prevent young people becoming extremist nationalist terrorists or supporters.

Although the UK Contest strategy and its Prevent strand have fundamental flaws that need to be addressed we argue that the government should treat both terrorist threats with equal importance and in the same way. To afford primacy to one over the other as is the case at present is hardly calculated to inspire Muslim community confidence, a necessary prerequisite for success in Prevent. On the contrary, a failure to afford the same priority to both weakens Muslim community confidence and also has the potential to be used by al-Qaeda propagandists who seek to exploit reasonable Muslim community grievances to attract new recruits and supporters.

Arguments we have heard from politicians and public servants involved in Prevent policy that the threat from violent extremist nationalists in the UK is local and lesser when compared to the al-Qaeda threat which is global and greater are not compelling now and likely to become less so during this new decade as it unfolds. In fact, the evidence is already sufficiently clear to conclude that violent extremist nationalists in the UK take inspiration from propaganda that is every bit as global in nature as that which promotes al-Qaeda. More importantly, violent extremist nationalists in the UK have a present capacity to inflict death and destruction on a scale that is broadly comparable to their UK counterparts who are inspired instead by al-Qaeda. Whereas the latter group sometimes have links to al-Qaeda affiliates or franchises in countries in the Middle East, Gulf and South East Asia that may assist them in terrorist training so too can members of the former group sometimes rely on long-standing links to violent extremist nationalists in countries in Europe, Scandinavia and North America.

More importantly, it is only necessary to recall the circumstances of the Oklahoma

City bombing in 1995 and the immediate political reaction to it to be reminded both of unsophisticated extremist nationalist bomb making capacity and the extent to which it often mirrors and resembles al-Qaeda's. Indeed, just as Timothy McVeigh was able to utilise skills and contacts he acquired in his US military service to build and detonate a bomb that killed 68 victims, injured 680 others, destroyed or damaged 324 buildings within a sixteen-block radius, destroyed or burned 86 cars, shattered glass in an additional 258 nearby buildings, and caused at least \$652 million worth of damage so too was former UK soldier Terence Gavan able to put his expert military skills to good use when manufacturing nail bombs with which to kill Muslims. With minimal help McVeigh was able to inflict more harm and damage with one bomb than four suicide bombers in London operating under an al-Qaeda flag in London ten years later. Significantly, McVeigh attacked a federal government building for reasons that make sense to a number of violent extremist nationalists in the UK, not least McVeigh's UK admirer Neil Lewington who was convicted in 2009 for possessing explosive devices. In the circumstances, it is neither alarmist nor wildly speculative to suggest that a future deadly bomb attack from individuals like Lewington and Gavan will be targeted at a mosque in the UK for the first time.

Similarly, the notion that al-Qaeda inspires or directs terrorism that is inherently more sophisticated or deadly than violent extremist nationalists are capable of is also shown to be misplaced by reference to recent al-Qaeda propaganda which promotes low-level terrorist attacks in the US and UK. Inspired by Major Nidal Hasan who killed 13 and injured 30 army colleagues at Fort Hood in November 2009, al-Qaeda propagandist Adam Gadahn called for Muslims to use similar ingenuity when planning attacks. It is worth quoting Gadahn at some length on this topic because he mirrors exactly the kind of tactical thinking that takes place in violent extremist nationalist circles:

[Hasan] realized that Islam neither calls for nor approves of hasty, reckless and poorly planned actions, and that's why he acted with caution and took the necessary steps in order to avoid repeating the mistakes others have made in operational and procedural matters. For example, Brother Nidal didn't – as far as we know – discuss his plans over government-monitored-and-controlled telephone and computer systems, nor did he confide his secrets to recent acquaintances – or even long-time acquaintances – whose professed loyalty to Islam and Muslims and apparent eagerness to defend their faith and brethren may or may not be as strong or as genuine as it appears.

Gadahn echoes much of the thinking of al-Qaeda strategist Abu Mus'ab al-Suri. For al-Suri the lessons of the history of all forms of insurgency are of value and pointed to the ultimate value of small scale self generated local actions. Gadahn continues:

Brother Nidal wasn't taken in by the provocateurs who infiltrate the Masjids and Muslim communities of America with hidden microphones in order to entrap Muslims eager to perform the duty of Jihad. And Brother Nidal didn't unnecessarily raise his security profile or waste money better spent on the operation itself by traveling abroad to acquire skills and instructions which could easily be acquired at home, or indeed, deduced by using one's own powers of logic and reasoning... For example, the first thing many people often ask is: "What weapon should I use in my operation?" But the answer to this question – and it's an important question – is not as difficult as it may seem. The Mujahid Brother Nidal Hasan used firearms in his assault on Fort Hood, but the fact is, today's Mujahid is no longer limited to bullets and bombs when it comes to his choice of a weapon. As the blessed operations of September 11th showed, a little imagination and planning and a minimal budget can turn almost anything into a deadly, effective and convenient weapon which can take the enemy by surprise and deprive him of sleep for years on end.

There is nothing here that has not been considered in exactly the same way by violent extremist nationalists who have been drawn to the same tactical conclusions for the same reasons. Gadahn concludes by suggesting tactical thinking akin to any extremist nationalist:

Another important and often intimidating stage of preparation for any operation is the targeting phase. When the time came to pick his target, the Mujahid Brother Nidal chose carefully, looking for a target with which he was well acquainted, a target which was feasible and a target whose hitting would have a major impact on the enemy. In Brother Nidal's case, these three important qualities came together in Fort Hood, but as you start to make your plans, you shouldn't make the mistake of thinking that military bases are the only high-value targets in America and the West. On the contrary, there are countless other strategic places, institutions and installations which, by striking, the Muslim can do major damage to the Crusader West and further our global agenda and long-range strategic objectives.

9.2 A conceptual flaw underpinning the War on Terror

Our research makes plain the pivotal role the war on terror has had in increasing anti-Muslim hate crimes and Islamophobia more generally in the UK. We suggest therefore that it is important to understand how the neo-Conservative architects of the war on terror chose to adopt a flawed analysis of the al-Qaeda threat that suited their hegemonic military and economic purposes. In endorsing and promoting it former Prime Minister Blair unwittingly provided the foundations for BNP, EDL and more explicitly violent extremist nationalist groups who now threaten the safety of Muslims in the UK.

We agree with David Lehany when he analyses the al-Qaeda threat as “political, not primarily religious, military, or even conventionally ideological”. Al-Qaeda’s leaders are, he suggests, strategic actors, who “believe themselves to be embedded in long-term, iterative struggles over outcomes”, activist who have “chosen their tactics accordingly”. Al-Qaeda terrorism is, he suggests, “largely about the use of potent symbols to hearten supporters and to intimidate enemies, and the tactics do not make sense outside of the symbolic contexts in which they are chosen”. Legitimacy, on this insightful account, is key to al-Qaeda’s vision of success and counter-terrorism strategies may, as Tupman and O’Reilly argue, unwittingly boost it when counter-terrorism is being orchestrated for the benefit of a different audience or agenda.

It follows, for us, that 9/11 was a carefully crafted act of ‘old’ political terrorism. According to al-Qaeda propagandist Saif al-Adl, 9/11 was intended to provoke the US to “lash out militarily against the ummah” in the manner if not the unprecedented scale of “the war on terror”. “The Americans took the bait” he continues “and fell into our trap”, (and we might add the British too), doubtless using hindsight to describe al-Qaeda’s ability to predict the massive scale of the war on terror. As P. Eric Loew observes, “a key al-Qaeda objective would have been to provoke US retaliation” so that the USA was seen as “brutally repressive.” Jessica Wolfendale interprets the war on terror as a US government blind-spot that failed to understand the need to undermine al-Qaeda’s legitimacy in the audiences where it seeks support. This, she argues, has had a negative impact on the effectiveness of counter-terrorism responses. She also assesses that the UK government imported the same failure of legitimacy and effectiveness into its strategies in the war on terror.

In contrast, and in support of the war on terror, al-Qaeda’s recourse to suicide bombings as a terrorist tactic led a group of academics to focus on the significance of the Islamic licence that was understood to be given to individuals who appeared to believe their role as human

bombs would lead to their martyrdom. Accounts that have explained suicide missions in the context of “political repression and economic misery rather than belief in the afterlife” have therefore been overshadowed by accounts that concentrate on their religious dynamic. The role of certain psychologists in regard to understanding suicide terrorism for the benefit of the war on terror has been pivotal. Ayla Schbley typifies the worst kind of psychological analysis when she claims that “fundamentalism, religious resurgence, and religious terrorism are the manifestation of the failure of modernity”. Like Ignatieff she believes the war on terror is necessary to help combat a pervasive Islamic mind-set that has the ability to “destabilize the world’s balance of power, the politics of world economic relations, U.S. hegemony, and its national security”.

9.3 Islamophobic cheerleaders for the war on terror

A key feature of this flawed analysis of the al-Qaeda threat has been the secondment of lapsed or disillusioned Muslims to be granted instant expert status because of their cultural connections to Islam. Thus in London although Patrick Sookhdeo was a long-standing and enthusiastic convert to Christianity his family roots in Muslim culture helped bolster his reputation as an expert on the al-Qaeda threat just as much as his academic qualifications. Indeed, key academics and policy advisors crafting the UK’s military contribution to the war on terror regarded Sookhdeo’s analysis of the threat – set out in his book *Understanding Islamic Terrorism* – as essential reading. According to Ivar Hellberg, Director of the Resilience Centre at Cranfield University at the UK Defence Academy, Shrivenham, Sookhdeo was “uniquely qualified to explain” what lay behind “the resurgence of militant Islamic fundamentalism and how the West should respond”. That response, Sookhdeo underlined in lectures to military, security and police audiences, was embodied in the military action at the heart of the war on terror but also needed to be supplemented with diplomatic action designed to encourage a reformation of Islamic teaching. Such a reformation, he was at pains to stress, needed to be undertaken solely by Muslims. Nevertheless, on this colonialist and Islamophobic account there remained a key role for Western governments: to empower and resource ‘moderate Muslims’ to undertake the task. Unsurprisingly, this is a task Tony Blair continues to undertake after retirement from government and party politics. What is surprising, however, is the failure of most political commentators to discern Blair’s embrace of a colonial policy.

For Sookhdeo, the “source texts of Islam” – the Qur’an, hadith and Shari’ah – contained passages which could be interpreted as permitting or commanding terrorism of the kind carried out by al-Qaeda. In particular Muhammad’s second period of prophet hood in Medina, he suggests, is where this interpretation gains root:

While in Medina he [Muhammad] believed that God gave him permission to fight those who were persecuting the Muslims. As he gained power, he became much more aggressive in his pronouncements and his actions against all opponents and non-Muslims, including his Meccan adversaries, massacring many, enslaving others and expelling them from their lands. He made a particular point of attacking trade caravans.

It follows, on Sookhdeo’s popular account, that Islamic terrorism (whether perpetrated by al-Qaeda, Hamas, Hizbollah or any other Muslim group) is based on “the continuing validity of the classic teachings of Islam on war and expansion of Islamic territory”. As such, he argues, for Islamic terrorism to be defeated at source, “Islam has to change and undergo a transformation”. “In the long term” he suggests, “the only way to bring an end to Islamic terrorism is to reform the teachings of Islam with regard to war and violence”. “Reform of

Islam” he notes, “would require a new *ijtihad* to reinterpret the original sources”.

Sookhdeo’s long term solution was endorsed by lapsed or liberal Muslims who lacked his academic pedigree but shared his commitment to reform Islam. For example, the popularist Canadian campaigner Irshad Manji insisted that there was “a nasty side of the Qur’an” that provided licence for al-Qaeda and other Islamic terrorists and that was in urgent need of reform. When Manji spoke on this theme in London in 2004 she was lauded by media commentators as a fearless voice of progressive Islam. For instance, she argued, if Mohamed Atta, the leader of the 9/11 terrorist cell had been accustomed to question the Qur’an he might not have followed it so blindly. “The very act of questioning the Qur’an” she claimed was essential to the reformation that would undermine Islamic terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism more generally. One of our interviewees who attended Manji’s London talk recalls how effectively she was able to mobilise support against mainstream Muslims in the UK:

[Manji’s] supporters seemed to be out of touch with reality. They thought somehow Manji was spearheading the reformation of Islam. It was crazy! They were passionate and committed... they didn’t care they were trampling over the values of ordinary Muslims. I was shocked. But now we’re used to it.

Inevitably, some of Manji’s most strident supporters in the UK have become regular critics of mainstream Muslim organisations. Reputable liberal Muslim academics such as Khaled Abou el-Fadl, Ziauddin Sardar, and Bassam Tibi, distanced themselves from Manji’s more controversial comments but were nevertheless quoted by her in support of her thesis. Similarly they would be referred to by advocates of the war on terror as examples of the kind of Muslims the West – on their analysis – needed to work with to be rid of the menace of Islamic terrorism and the Islamic fundamentalism that spawned it.

For London’s secular intelligentsia Sardar was an especially appealing voice of moderation. In his popular biography *Desperately Seeking Paradise* he recalled having met Osama bin Laden in Peshawar and to have discerned then the terrorist’s defining characteristic to be a blind adherence to literalism. “To make the Word flesh” he notes, “one must have the power of God”. “The literalists” like bin Laden he argues, “had assumed that impossible power” and in doing so “had ceased to ask the fundamental questions of existence: who are we? why are we? where are we going? what is the purpose of humanity?” Instead of engaging with such universal questions, Sardar argues, “their literalism provided ready-made answers to everything” and led to the “madness” of 9/11. Especially helpful for the architects of the war on terror was Sardar’s insistence that, because of this mind-set, it was impossible to negotiate with bin Laden and his kind.

In contrast, Peter Bergan, who had also met bin Laden, refused to accept that 9/11 was premised on hatred or envy of the West or ant-modernism:

In all the tens of thousands of words that bin Laden has uttered on the public record... [he] does not rail against the pernicious effects of Hollywood movies, or against Madonna’s midriff, or against the pornography protected by the US Constitution ... [B]in Laden cares little about such cultural issues. What he condemns the United States for is simple: its policies in the Middle East.

In 2010 there is a greater appreciation that Bergan’s analysis is more accurate than the one that drove the war on terror but very little appreciation of the collateral damage the war on terror has inflicted on Muslim communities in the UK.

In direct contrast to Bergan, Sookhdeo maintained a steadfast commitment to a conceptualisation of al-Qaeda as an Islamic threat and a clear exposition of how that threat should be countered. On his influential account the al-Qaeda threat was fostered by

a religion that was incompatible with democracy and expressly prone to violence. Such a conceptualisation has far reaching implications for the war on terror. It would later be modified from an 'Islamic' threat to an 'Islamist' threat but the need for the reform of Islam to counter terrorism remained central to the war on terror.

9.4 Demonising politically-active Muslims

Our research confirms that Muslims who adhere to Islam as the basis for their engagement in UK politics often face a greater threat of political violence and intimidation than their more secular or less politically active colleagues. It is therefore important to explain how a flawed analysis of the war on terror and 'home-grown radicalism' made popular in the UK by Ed Husain fuels the campaigns of the BNP, EDL and their violent counterparts. During this process, by an odd symbiosis, Husain has adopted the presentational style of Tony Blair while Blair has enthusiastically endorsed Husain's analysis and his solutions. In fairness, neither Husain nor Blair appears to have realised the extent to which they might have fuelled extremist nationalist propaganda and violence.

To conceive and locate al-Qaeda at the violent end of a continuum of subversive Islamist threats is also to licence counter-insurgency strategies against a range of non-violent Islamist groups on the premise that they serve as a 'conveyor belt' or 'gateway' to terrorist recruitment or support. To conduct counter-insurgency operations in Iraq and Afghanistan in the war on terror places a high demand on the resources of military personnel. To seek to intervene in the 'conveyor belt' process in Muslim communities in the UK requires a counter-subversion strategy of the kind deployed against suspected communist and Trotskyist sympathisers in an earlier 'battle for hearts and minds'. This inevitably leads to a consideration of non-violent Islamist groups as counter-subversive targets. For academics including Daniel Pipes it is absolutely essential to pursue a robust counter-subversion strategy against all Islamists so as to reverse the debilitating effect of what they describe pejoratively as 'Londonistan', a place where subversive 'Islamists' had been accommodated and appeased for a decade.

By working closely with think-tanks including the Hudson Institute in the US and Policy Exchange and the Centre for Social Cohesion (CSC) in the UK Daniel Pipes was able to reach policy makers and commentators in Westminster and a wide public readership. Indeed such was the strength of his UK network that Pipes surprisingly mustered more supporters than Ken Livingstone, the London mayor, at a packed QE2 conference centre in Westminster on 20 January 2007 when the two debated the Islamist threat. Pipes castigated Ken Livingstone for embracing Islamists, most especially the leading representative of the Islamist threat: Sheikh Yusef al-Qaradawi. In his defence the London mayor cited the US academic John Esposito who regarded al-Qardawi as a pivotal reformist scholar concerned with Islam's relationship with "democracy, pluralism and human rights". Esposito was one of a handful of Western scholars to familiarise himself with al-Qaradawi's trenchant criticism of religious extremism during the preceding decade:

Extremism means being situated at the farthest possible point from the centre...it indicates a similar remoteness in religion, in thought as well as in behaviour. One of the main consequences of extremism is exposure to danger and insecurity. Islam, therefore, recommends moderation and balance in everything: in belief, ibadah, conduct and legislation.

For Esposito, an Islamist scholar such as al-Qaradawi might serve as a bulwark against al-Qaeda influence; for Pipes the same scholar was a symbol of London's Islamist malaise. Islamism, Pipes argued, should be tackled in the way communism had been dealt with

during the Cold War – as a dangerous, long-term, subversive threat. A burgeoning body of think-tank and populist literature bore witness to Pipes' influence in the UK: Michael Gove and Melanie Phillips stoking a fear of political and fundamentalist Islam, Meghdad Desai comparing Islamism to communism, Martin Bright denigrating hitherto respectable UK Muslim groups like the Muslim Council of Britain.

This anti-Islamist perspective received a further boost when Ed Husain published *The Islamist* in which he recounted his experience of joining and leaving the non-violent, extremist Islamist group, Hizb ut Tahrir. While the book gained little credence in Muslim circles it became a best seller amongst a secular intelligentsia in London. Regrettably, despite opposition, Husain's verdict that "home-grown British suicide bombers [were] a direct result of Islamists disseminating ideas of jihad, martyrdom, confrontation, and anti-Americanism, and nurturing a sense of separation among British Muslims" resonated in Whitehall and became a cornerstone of counter-terrorism policy.

Like Pipes and Husain, Gilles Kepel was a staunch critic of the UK's allegedly soft approach to "radical Islamist ideologists" prior to 7/7. He acknowledged that Tony Blair's announcement of tough counter-terrorism measures against the Islamist threat "signified a radical departure from the traditional British policy towards its Islamist community". "The policy of Londonistan – a place where political asylum was given to radical Islamist ideologists in return for keeping Britain a sanctuary from violence – was" he suggested, "buried for good". In consequence, Kepel argued, Britain now had to discard a failed policy of multiculturalism and adopt the French model of "radical secularism". The latter model had, he claimed, by a programme of social control including, most notably, a ban on all religious symbols in schools, conscious integration and a preventative security policy lead to "France being spared from terror attacks for the past decade". Indeed, when Prime Minister Blair highlighted a duty "to share and support the values that sustain the British way of life" in a counter-terrorist context it became clear that Kepel had struck a note that chimed with a new UK policy.

At no point did the Blair government embrace credible academics like Martha Crenshaw who held a clear view that the war on terror was fundamentally antithetical to effective counter-terrorism. For Crenshaw, it was equally clear that the war on terror was prone to over-reaction, to cause indiscriminate harm on a large scale and to conflate al-Qaeda with unrelated groups and minority sections of Muslim communities. On all three issues it appeared that the US government (and by association the UK government) was responding to 9/11 in the way terrorists always intended that governments, military and security services should respond to terrorist acts.

9.5 Fueling extremist nationalist violence

As a Muslim youth worker pointed out to us this drive to divide and rule Muslims in the UK has fostered a strand of Islamophobia that is targeted against politically active Muslims opposed the war on terror. On the evidence of our research to date it has also empowered and emboldened the BNP, the EDL and the violent extremist nationalist milieu that surrounds those organisations.

To illustrate, Paul Ray is an anti-Muslim activist in Luton who runs a website called 'Lionheart'. Ray has been at the hub of violent protests in Luton purportedly in response to a provocative demonstration against returning British troops by an affiliate of extremist group al-Muhajiroun. Ray is tuned in to local politics albeit largely confined to Luton and one or two other towns in the UK. He knows precisely what grievances exist in his local

community and has become adept at exploiting them. With a dramatic upturn in violent and non-violent demonstrations against Muslims he is typical of a burgeoning kind of radical who feeds off widespread Islamophobia and anti-Muslim sentiment to provide propaganda for his contribution to a network of activists promoting anti-Muslim bigotry and either wittingly or unwittingly fostering anti-Muslim hate-crime.

Whereas ten years ago Ray might have focused on Asian targets now his sole focus for attack are Muslims (or 'Moslems' as he would prefer to call them). It is, moreover, an account that expressly refutes the legitimacy and effectiveness of mainstream Muslim organisations like the MCB on the basis that they purportedly foster the very approach to Islam that licences al-Qaeda. Ray cites Melanie Phillips, Daniel Pipes and company in support of his case.

Members of the extremist nationalist milieu in the UK like Ray see themselves as responding directly to the kind of al-Qaeda threat Sookhdeo, Phillips, Pipes, Policy Exchange, Centre for Social Cohesion, et al describe and that is why the MCB and other mainstream Muslim organizations faces a threat of violence from them. While violent extremist nationalists accept that the US and UK military are taking the fight to the al-Qaeda enemy abroad they increasingly believe that they have a role to play themselves in the UK. Following the line of their favoured political commentators they believe that UK counter-terrorism is often hamstrung by political correctness and that they have a role to play by dealing themselves with 'Muslim terrorists' and 'Muslim extremists'.

Present day violent extremist nationalists therefore concentrate on Muslim targets while drawing inspiration from role models like Timothy McVeigh, David Copeland and Tony Lecomber who operated in their field in an era before the Muslim threat became clear. Copeland and Lecomber are also important examples because they were closely connected to the BNP. We dealt with Copeland's case in our first report and we are prompted to recall Lecomber's conviction for explosives offences in 1985 because he has retained his allegiance (if not his membership) to the 'modern' BNP. As recently as 2006 Lecomber was reported to have discussed plans to assassinate prominent UK politicians, presumably for presiding over 'the multi-cultural experiment' that the BNP diagnoses as the root cause of the UK's ills.

However, whereas, when Lecomber, Copeland and other violent extremist nationalists were arrested for 'terrorist-like' offences in the 1980s and 1990s searches of their homes tended to reveal literature that included *Mein Kampf*, *The Anarchist Cookbook* (containing terrorist tips) and (in the 1990s) *The Turner Diaries* along with a plethora of racist and anti-Semitic far right publications, those arrested post 7/7 are far more likely to have literature written by influential, mainstream neo-conservative writers in their possession. This is a significant development and helps to illustrate a major shift in targeting strategy. What remains extant and what appears to have been exacerbated by the rhetoric of the war on terror is the willingness of a small number of activists like Lecomber to engage in high-risk highly dangerous criminal activity. A summary of his case remains germane, not least because it reveals a willingness to move between non violent and violent roles:

Lecomber was convicted for criminal damage in 1982, offences under the Explosives Act in 1985, and was sentenced to three years' imprisonment in 1991 for an attack on a Jewish teacher. In 1985, he was injured by a firework that he was carrying to the offices of the Workers Revolutionary Party. Police found 10 grenades, seven petrol bombs and two detonators at his home. In 1991, Lecomber saw a Jewish teacher removing a BNP sticker at a London Underground station and attacked him.

Switching immediately to his public BNP role:

[Lecomber] was released from his three-year sentence in time to play a key part in the BNP's

by-election win in Millwall ward of Tower Hamlets in September 1993. Later in the 1990s, Lecomber became closer to Nick Griffin and supported Griffin when he successfully challenged John Tyndall's leadership of the BNP in 1999. In 2006 Lecomber was sacked from his position as Group Development Officer. This followed allegations made by former Merseyside BNP organiser that Lecomber had tried to recruit him to assassinate prominent politicians and members of the British establishment. Lecomber admitted that a conversation had taken place but stated that he hadn't meant the comments to be taken literally.

Studiously ignored in Whitehall during the last decade the fact that actors who engage in political violence exploit pre-existing political grievances is axiomatic to every kind of terrorist threat the UK has faced in this and the preceding two centuries. This is the context that helps explain why serious attempts to kill and maim Muslims by members of a burgeoning violent extremist nationalist milieu in the UK are not being taken sufficiently seriously by government, parliament, police or security services. To wait to be prompted into action by a future terrorist outrage in which Muslims are murdered, injured and traumatised would represent a tragic failure to respond now to a very clear and demonstrable threat. Not only would immediate action help reduce the threat it would also demonstrate to Muslims in the UK that their safety was as important as the wider population.

An important first step is a conceptual one – to recognise the phenomenon for what it is: terrorism, and of political violence. This is not to say that individual cases do not reveal features and characteristics commonly attributed to hate-crimes but rather to acknowledge that there is no difference in principle or practice between British men attempting to bomb UK targets suggested by al-Qaeda and those attempting to bomb UK targets suggested by extremist nationalist websites.

9.6 Motivation for terrorism and political violence against Muslims

Experienced participants, observers and investigators of extremist nationalist violence agree that motivation has switched from perceived racial, ethnic, Zionist and anti-racist enemies to an overwhelming preoccupation with responding to 'the Muslim threat'. The notion of 'radical Islamist' or 'Islamist terrorist' is especially pronounced in the available evidence that suggests the motivation of a small but significant number of individuals who have been convicted of offences that warrant inclusion in an underused typology – terrorism and political violence. Whether regarded as lone wolves or rather more accurately – in certain cases – as members of a loosely affiliated violent extremist nationalist milieu, these are clearly individuals who commit serious criminal offences that differ little in terms of tactics from many that have been classified as al-Qaeda inspired terrorism when committed by another group of UK citizens. Indeed, the extent to which extremist nationalists feel licensed to carry out bomb attacks against Muslim targets is often based on their perception that they are responding to an al-Qaeda type threat of violence against them.

Interestingly, one experienced practitioner interviewee highlighted the shift by explaining how the BNP, EDL and its violent supporters chose to ignore some of the same kind of behaviour it would otherwise act on when it was carried out by faith communities who were not Muslim.

To illustrate, in marked contrast to scenarios that involve Muslim leaders, in targeting extremist nationalist outrage at the conduct of Christian leaders and Christian elites does not manifest itself in acts of violence, least of all political violence, in the UK. For example, despite an outpouring of popular tabloid indignation and moral disapprobation aimed at the Pope

and the Roman Catholic church for failing to address an endemic problem of child sex abuse by its clergy over decades there has been no indication that extremist nationalist groups or individuals plan to attack Catholic targets by way of retribution or summary justice. Given the ease with which lynch mobs take to the streets to dispense summary justice to paedophiles this is noteworthy public restraint worthy of comment. Indeed, given that there tends to be a symbiotic relationship between lynch mobs and tabloid newspapers then it may be significant that individual Catholic clergy have not been highlighted and demonised by UK tabloids in the way that paedophiles often are.

Still more surprising is the studious silence on the issue of Catholic child sex abuse from extremist nationalist groups who have in the past shown leadership in the field of lynch mob retribution aimed at paedophiles. Thus although BNP leader Nick Griffin campaigned for capital punishment for paedophiles when he was a member of the National Front criticism of the Catholic clergy is no part of his agenda today. Instead the BNP and the violent extremist nationalist milieu that feeds off it is purposefully focused on demonising just one religion: Islam. Previously and more typically, in 1977, members of the National Front attacked and seriously injured members of the Paedophile Information Exchange (PIE) when they met to discuss their shared interest at Conway Hall in Red Lion Square.

During March and April 2010 the media dealt calmly with the concluding phase of a long running story in which the Pope and Roman Catholic archbishops and bishops acknowledged the extent to which they had conspired to cover-up and conceal long term paedophile offences against children. In Easter sermons across Europe senior Catholics apologised belatedly for 'the way the church had dealt with paedophile priests and acknowledged the damage the scandal had caused to its moral authority'. For the BNP, EDL and a surrounding violent extremist nationalist milieu Catholic wrongdoing is ignored so as to concentrate an attack on Islam.

9.7 Role of BNP and EDL

Building on Nick Griffin's 2001 seminal audio recording *The Truth About Islam* a relentless BNP campaign against Muslims has continued apace. In fact during the last decade Griffin's trenchant analysis – especially regarding terrorism and the Bradford and Northern riots of 2001 – has become embedded in BNP culture and far beyond. Similarly the BNP artwork that captures the essence of Griffin's audio tape has become iconic in extremist nationalist circles (*see opposite*).

THE TRUTH ABOUT ISLAM

Intolerance

Slaughter

Looting

Arson

Molestation of women



This moral outrage against Muslims and against Islam reached fever pitch in March 2009 when the BNP responded to what it called “the shocking anti-British army protest by a group of Muslims in central Luton earlier today” and described it as “a portent of what is to come unless the Islamification of this country is halted.” Peter Mullins, the BNP defence spokesman warned:

The disgraceful sight of Muslim protestors carrying posters saying ‘Anglian Soldiers Go to Hell’ while parading through town after tours of duty risking their lives is the inevitable consequence of the colonisation of this country by Third Worlders. Luton is well known as a heavily Muslim colonised town, and it is little wonder that there was nearly a confrontation between indigenous British people watching the parade and the Muslim protestors. Only the BNP will bring an end to this madness.

The same event sparked the mobilisation and expansion of the EDL. Throughout 2009 and 2010 the BNP and the EDL campaigned passionately and angrily against Islam and Muslims. In consequence Muslims in many UK towns and cities faced an increased threat of hate-crimes, including verbal and physical threats. MCB and other mainstream Muslim organisations worked with the police to tackle the problem. In the circumstances the suggestion from Qulliam that the MCB and other mainstream groups were essentially the same as fringe, extremist groups like Islam 4 The UK and al-Muhajiroun was unhelpful and unwelcome in communities actively tackling violent extremism of all kinds.

During 2009 police noted an increased threat of Islamophobia and anti-Muslim violence

posed by the BNP, EDL and likeminded extremist political groups. This included a realisation that the actions of a small, extremist group like Islam 4 The UK (and the media's handling of the topic) could fan the flames of anti-Muslim sentiment promoted strongly by the BNP, EDL and others. BNP activity in this field however is relentless and a decade long. For example, Muslim community leaders denounced a BNP party political broadcast that was screened on Friday, 29th May 2004. Despite the last minute editing of controversial material that focused on the sexual 'grooming' of young white girls by Asian men in Bradford the broadcast was explicit in its linking of the al-Qaeda terrorist threat with Islam. Nick Griffin, the BNP leader, made it perfectly clear that a vote for the BNP was a vote against the dual threat of an expansionist and violent Islam and an immigration policy that overlooked the interests of a non Muslim majority. Other political leaders might mince their words when it came to the threat posed by Islam, but he, Nick Griffin, would not. By including the contributions of a Sikh leader the broadcast sought to highlight the alleged universal nature of the threat posed by Islam.

Not surprisingly, Muslim community leaders reacted angrily to the broadcast. In London Muslim community leaders monitored reaction both in terms of Islamophobic incidents and Muslim community reaction. At the time police assessed that rather than prompting a visible and immediate rise in community tension or violent public order responses the BNP broadcast played a contributory part in the cumulative long term impact of Islamophobic sentiment on Muslim communities. Arun Kundnani captured and contextualised this BNP strategy perfectly in 2002:

Since 2001 the BNP has had ambitions to pit Hindus and Sikhs against Muslims since Nick Griffin's successful leadership bid and the subsequent 'rebranding' of the party. The focus switched to Islam as Britain's primary enemy and the BNP claimed to have abandoned its policy of forcibly repatriating all non-whites. Of course, the 'media-savvy' reinvention of the party was in all probability a sham yet for some on the fringes of the Khalistani movement (which calls for a separate Sikh homeland in the Punjab), hatred of Muslims is so strong that even the BNP can be seen as a potential ally. This is ironic as, in India, the Khalistani movement has traditionally seen Muslim separatists as friends while the enemy has been a central government perceived as Hindu.

9.8 Influence of BNP and EDL on recent political violence

In several towns and cities around the UK our researchers have found compelling evidence of the presence and adverse influence of BNP, EDL, SDL, WDL and sister organisations on local Muslim communities. Experienced investigators of extremist nationalist political violence confirm that the BNP and allied groups have always enjoyed pockets of tight support in key locations in most parts of the country. Often these venues can be discerned in higher levels of BNP votes in general and local elections. Interviewed by Chris Allen, Dave Allport and Denise Maxwell, project managers for Rewind, explain how BNP strongholds have deep roots in parts of the West Midlands:

In Sandwell, I think, historically – I always quote this, and its true – I've been to meetings in the council house, and they talk about 'hotspots', where they need to engage white people and so on. And those same hotspots that they talk about now are the same areas that I couldn't have gone to, hung around in when I was young, with my mates who were predominantly black, for fear of being attacked. And when we did try, we did get attacked. And those areas would be the same that they talk about now as being in need of work around these issues. So areas like Tipton, per se, generally

Tipton, not the whole of Tipton, but probably certain areas; Prince's End, Tivington Estate, within Tipton. Friar Park, in Wednesbury, and Newbury Estate, which is just on the Walsall border. And historically – in the '70s there was National Front activity, and KKK activity in Newbury estate, for a time, that they had to report. Because they were actually burning crosses. And that's not that long ago. Probably about ten years ago. Probably less. So the right has been active for years.

This kind of local knowledge is invaluable for researchers, especially when assessing the growth of the EDL and its relationship with BNP support:

And I think as well in Sandwell, you find the main players as well, in terms of people like Simon Darby, who was right up there in terms of BNP leadership, and now left the BNP, but a far right party. He was on one of the...you know the leaders' questions and answers debates? There was one held in Birmingham the other day, but it wasn't the leaders it was some of their top men, and he was one of the people that asked a question there. He stood up and said 'Simon Darby' and he was talking about how the indigenous population in Birmingham, how it's fallen to 17%, and just talking about immigration etc. But he was in Sandwell for quite a while, and he didn't live in Tipton, but he spent a lot of time in Tipton as well. So I think a lot of the main players have been involved in Sandwell in some way or another. Also, in terms of our St. George's day parade, we have the biggest one in the country. Although St. George's is a celebration about your patron saint, it does attract a lot of far right influence, and far right support. So it does get advertised on different far right websites. And people are encouraged to come to it...Nick Griffin, and a couple of other leaders within the BNP have attended our St. George's day parade, which again, coming from wherever he's coming from, all the way to little old Sandwell, that's horrific. And on one of the years, he did actually stand up in the park and make a speech to lots of people as well.

These pockets of extremist nationalist influence around the country and may not be immediately discernable to outsiders. A Muslim woman travelling by bus through South Oxhey discovered that this was a BNP stronghold when she encountered racist and anti-Muslim abuse and violence. Since 9/11 many Muslims have become painfully aware of similar 'no-go areas' where they face an increased risk of violence and abuse.

In an account repeated around the UK, the chairman of the only mosque in Boston, Lincolnshire explains that the influence of the BNP is evident in the local neighbourhood:

Well everybody knows BNP and BNP's policies and especially they don't like, you know, Muslims around, and especially Muslim immigrants. ...well I think, well they, everybody knows about their agenda, and they don't hide, they say, well "they should go back" and all this.

Racist and anti-Muslim violence is understood to be linked to BNP influence, although Muslims in Boston as elsewhere have no ready way of establishing it:

There was a pharmacist who used to work in the hospital [in Boston] and once he was beaten up by the guys and they just tried to, ...to steal some money from him, and there was another doctor and once he was going after to his house after praying, after Isha and he was also attacked by some guys, so some incidents, you know.

Many of our interviewees in England confirm this assessment and several add the EDL as having a far worse negative influence. Some link this influence to violence they have experienced but clear evidence is often lacking for Muslims. This is where the experience of grass roots community projects like Rewind is invaluable.

In June 2010 an unnamed sixteen year old youth, together with Jason Cunningham, aged twenty-seven from Tamworth, became the latest in a growing list of UK citizens convicted of manufacturing improvised explosive devices (particularly nail bombs) or explosive substances where there is evidence of allegiance to extreme nationalism, in this case to the EDL, BNP

and neo-Nazism. It is also clearly the kind of case where access to prosecution and court files will be needed to conduct the detailed research needed to ascertain precise information about motivation and targeting. There is, however, a stark contrast between the perfunctory media coverage of cases like this and the more extensive and sensationalist coverage that arises when the would-be bomb makers happen to be Muslims.

Thus the Daily Telegraph reports the sixteen year old boy was in possession of “literature from the right wing groups the British National Party and the English Defence League, together with Nazi emblems” and his defence lawyer’s submission that his client was not a “terrorist with hidden agendas” and that “there was never at any time, any positive intention to make any aggressive use of the [explosive] items strewn about his [client’s] bedroom”. As Mehdi Hasan has remarked, reporting like this stands in marked contrast to the kind of reporting that accompanies Muslims convicted in similar circumstances. Had the lawyer’s client been a Muslim convicted in identical circumstances it is hard to imagine that such a media report would not challenge the lawyer’s claim that there was nothing the case “to suggest there was any intention to cause harm to human life.” As such the reporting of this case follows a double-standard that was exposed by Hasan in 2009. Hasan’s investigation was also useful when we first analysed the growing phenomenon of political violence against Muslims in June 2009.

Hasan’s interest was prompted by media coverage of Neil Lewington’s case. “Imagine, for a moment,” Hasan suggests, “that Neil Lewington, who is on trial at the Old Bailey for preparing for a “campaign of terrorism” ...was a British Muslim”. “The story” he suggests, “would be splashed across the front page of every newspaper in Britain, and Sky News would be rolling a loop of images of his scowling, bearded, dark face”:

The reality, however, is that you’ve probably never heard of Lewington (who denies all eight charges of terrorism) because he is not Muslim, or black, or of Asian origin. He is white. And our gloriously impartial, truth-seeking, “colour-blind” media don’t seem to care. The coverage of the Lewington trial has been negligible – a few short stories buried deep inside a handful of newspapers, but, as I write, no rolling coverage on Sky News, and not a peep on the main BBC news bulletins or on Newsnight.

Lewington was convicted of terrorism and explosives offences in July 2009:

Neil Lewington, 44, an unemployed electrician whose heroes were the nail bomber David Copeland and the Oklahoma bomber Timothy McVeigh, was told by a judge that he faced a long prison sentence.

9.9 Neil Lewington case: a community perspective

Our own research into the Lewington case has so far focused on Lowestoft, Lewington’s destination when he was arrested. Before detailing our research findings we should recap the reporting of his case:

Lewington, from Tilehurst, Berkshire, was arrested in October after causing a disturbance on a train travelling to Lowestoft, Suffolk. His hold all was found to contain components for two incendiary devices, including digital clocks, batteries, wiring, firelighters and ignition mechanisms. There were also tools to complete assembly of the firebombs. In his wallet were notes headed “device 1” and “device 2” with lists marked: “date”, “place”, “target”, “weather”, “device used: solid fuel incendiary”, “delay” and “detonated?”

A police search of Lewington’s bedroom revealed the following items:

Chemical mixtures labeled “igniter”, weed killer, firelighters, fuses, pyrotechnic boosters and books entitled Homemade Ammo: How to Make It, How to Reload It, How to Cache It and The Do-It-

Yourself Gunpowder Cookbook. There were tennis balls with diagrams of how they might be turned into shrapnel bombs. Police also found a notebook labeled “Waffen SS UK Members’ Handbook” in which were writings and diagrams under the headings “picking target areas”, “transporting devices”, “targeting/attacking parts” and “counter-surveillance”.

Neil Lewington apparently drew inspiration from David Copeland’s successful bombing campaign in London. At the end of his trial Deputy Assistant Commissioner John McDowall, head of the Met’s Counter-Terrorism Command, said:

While our inquiries did not uncover any details about intended targets, we do not underestimate the impact that Lewington’s actions and extremist beliefs may have had on communities nationwide.

Our assessment of the nature of the threat posed by Lewington in January is also worth re-iterating:

Clearly, like Copeland, Lewington posed a threat to more than one minority ethnic community, and we do not seek to suggest that Muslim targets would have featured more prominently on his target list than others. However, our expert interviewees do suggest that in 2009 he would have been far more likely to specifically target Muslims than Copeland was ten years earlier. In this sense Muslim Londoners may be said to face a double risk: a threat of attack from apolitical street gangs and individuals unconnected to violent extremist nationalist politics (see examples below) and an entirely separate threat from individuals like Lewington with a racist pedigree who would include Muslims as part of their target group or who might prioritise Muslim targets in the same way that non-violent extremist politicians like Nick Griffin do.

In the course of our fieldwork we encountered an interesting perspective on the Lewington case from a reliable Muslim community interviewee in Lowestoft, the town where Lewington was travelling to when he was arrested and where he may have intended to carry out an attack. Three key issues emerge that were largely ignored in the media coverage that followed Lewington’s conviction. Firstly, that Lewington was understood to be targeting Muslims and not ethnic minorities more generally; secondly that Lewington had an additional personal motivation to target Muslims; and thirdly, that the case created fear and anxiety in the local Muslim community.

It will therefore be useful to set the scene in terms of Muslim community experience in Lowestoft. In fact Lowestoft is typical in terms of a many towns in the UK where we have conducted fieldwork and where a small Muslim population has come to experience increased anti-Muslim violence and intimidation since 9/11. Constant acts of vandalism and petty crime against the mosque by local youths has forced the mosque to adopt a siege mentality and a low profile. When an EMRC researcher visited Lowestoft on 5 August 2010 he walked past the building five times without realising it was a mosque because on the advice of police it had virtually been camouflaged and boarded up so as to reduce risk of further damage and attack [incidents include petty theft, criminal damage, vandalism, banging on mosque door and general anti-social behaviour]. A mosque official explains:

[The police]... told us to keep the low profile, you understand. ...This window actually, this window is broken you know. We put a tape on it, you know, you can see that, and even we still have no letter box and everything you know. You can see, because we don’t want somebody to leave arson or anything, you know. Either they will do that sort of thing, or they will give the pork chop or something. We don’t want that...it’s a continuous thing, it’s not that it’s coming every day, especially ...is Friday night, Saturday night, you know, it’s loads of, you know, drinks swilling around and people, you know, that sort of thing, [kicking Mosque door] especially the young locals know that there is a Mosque here, and that sort of thing.

Equally typically the mosque officials and the community it serves are long suffering and slow to complain about the predicament they face, preferring to follow police advice and 'keep a low profile'. Nevertheless, this kind of problem and indeed this kind of community response increases a sense of anxiety in the community that is bound to be exacerbated when the media carries a story about a foiled terrorist attack against the Muslims in the same neighbourhood. Rumour becomes rife and a siege mentality becomes intensified. This was certainly the situation in Lowestoft in July 2009 as our interviewee explains:

...one guy [Lewington] was coming from London to kill some Muslim people over here and he was bringing the bomb and all sorts of things in his bag, and he was drunk... the railway guard he call the police, and he [Lewington] was arrested outside Lowestoft Station, and when police searched him, found that he is having the bomb equipments and everything, and he was coming here to blow up the Muslims in Lowestoft.

Clearly the sense of alarm that surrounded the reporting of the Lewington case was increased because the local Muslim community had experienced a number of attacks on its mosque and also violence against Muslims in street. In the latter case it was less clear whether the attacks were motivated by anti-Muslim sentiment or more general racist or anti-immigrant sentiment. Typically, our interviewee in Lowestoft was inclined to discount racist and anti-immigrant sentiment as a sufficient motivating factor for the violence because the problem had grown worse since 9/11.

This then was the context for our interviewee's fascinating account of the Lewington case:

What happen[ed] actually, the link, as we found in the media and we have spoken to police and, he [Lewington] had a intimate girlfriend. She lives in Lowestoft, and she used to have a husband, a Muslim husband, and they split up and she had lots of stories, you know, against the Muslim husband probably, and that guy [Lewington] pretty sympathise with her, and he probably has taken that on his own strike to get the Muslims sorted I think...

We do not seek to suggest that our interviewee has established an authoritative or definitive account of the Lewington case – far from it – but we would argue that his community focused account illustrates how media and messages from police often combine to inform local knowledge that is in turn amplified by information from within communities. This is what happens, especially in small insular Muslim communities such as in Lowestoft. The mosque official continues:

[Lewington] became anti-Muslim, you know, because of this woman and that's why he come to blow up. Police didn't especially tell us, or especially place or a special person individual. 'Cos only we heard this from because if he knows that it is a Mosque, he might have planned to blow this one up or blow other, because... Even, its fortunate that the guy was drunk that night, that day, when he was travelling through the train to attack somebody.

We conclude our brief analysis of this local perspective by reference to the narrative that developed in the local community:

Because that woman [Lewington's girlfriend], she lives in this town and she got married [to a] Muslim man in this town, they got two children, and they split up, I think, there was a story... because she ran away, blah, blah, blah, and the man he take the children with him, and he don't live in Lowestoft, that guy, he live in London now.

Important evidence here then of an account where political extremism combines with personal antagonism to produce a motivation that is particular to an individual case. Whatever a full investigation of motivation might reveal we can be sure that it would involve a personal story of one kind or another (if not precisely the one that has been told in this

local community) working in combination with an attachment to even the loosest form of extremist nationalism to produce the criminal mens rea that distinguishes all kinds of political violence from extremist political ideology per se. As it stands we have a story of violence and failed relationships that the national mainstream media would generally love to exploit, especially in connection with al-Qaeda related terrorism, but seemingly not when Muslims are the intended target.

9.10 Aptitude for terrorism and political violence

Tony Lecomber is typical of a small number of violent extremist nationalist activists who operate publicly and covertly – both as a street activist and as a terrorist. As such he is atypical because majority of extremist nationalist activists do not resort to violence. Lecomber though appears to have leadership qualities of a certain kind unlike Lewington and most other extremist nationalists convicted of terrorist (like) offences. As well as Lewington's case, Hasan's article also drew attention to a series of similar convictions that attracted minimal media interest:

Robert Cottage, a former BNP candidate jailed in July 2007 for possessing explosive chemicals in his home – 'described by police at the time of his arrest as the largest amount of chemical explosive of its type ever found in this country'; Martyn Gilleard, a Nazi sympathiser 'jailed in June 2008 after police found nail bombs, bullets, swords, axes and knives in his flat, as well as a note in which he had written, "I am so sick and tired of hearing nationalists talk of killing Muslims, of blowing up mosques, of fighting back... the time has come to stop the talk and start to act;" Nathan Worrell, a 'neo-Nazi, described by police as a "dangerous individual", who hoarded bomb-making materials in his home, and was found guilty in December 2008 of possessing material for terrorist purposes and for racially aggravated harassment'; Neil MacGregor, who pleaded guilty to 'threatening to blow up Glasgow Central Mosque and behead a Muslim every week until every mosque in Scotland was closed'.

Just as violent and intimidatory demonstrations by extremist nationalist groups such as the National Front (NF) and the British National Party (BNP) have always been understood to be qualitatively different from acts of racist violence of the kind in which Stephen Lawrence was murdered so too when Muslims are the targets of political violence instead of public demonstrations, we argue, should the same typological distinction be made. It follows that to demonstrate adherence to the ideology of the EDL by taking part in its demonstrations against Muslim 'extremists' is to provide necessary evidence of commitment to a cause but insufficient evidence of the different kind of commitment required to take part in a conspiracy to murder or seriously injure Muslims by the manufacture of nail bombs. Indeed, as we highlighted in our London case study, motivation for political violence (and many acts of anti-Muslim hate crime qualify for this categorisation) requires far more than a commitment to an ideology.

Indeed one of the grave shortcomings in Ed Husain's popular account of 'home grown radicalisation' is that it confuses political activism with political violence and falsely posits motivation for one as serving the other equally well. Ironically, Husain himself provides compelling unwitting testimony of the weakness of ideological commitment as a sufficient motivator or 'conveyor belt' to violent extremism (or terrorism) or any kind of high risk criminal activity when he recalls the zenith of his own vicarious criminal career as a Hizb ut Tahrir ideologue: his close colleagues' criminal damage to Iniyat Bunglawala's father's car.

The key point is that belief in an extremist ideology – whether Hizb ut Tahrir, BNP or EDL

– is a necessary but insufficient causal factor in determining a capacity for political violence of any serious kind, whether a serious terrorist conspiracy, a serious assault on a member of a target community or organisations or a firebomb attack on a mosque. Significantly, this gulf between ideological commitment and criminal capacity is considered axiomatic and self evident by the experienced investigators of political violence we have interviewed. It is, moreover, a gulf that both Marc Sageman and Chris Morris have elucidated separately to powerful effect after having each spent considerable time post 7/7 researching court transcripts and other records of al-Qaeda inspired terrorist conspiracies in the UK.

Equally noteworthy, the reticence of most ideological extremists to take the risks inherent in political violence is often used by recruiters and facilitators of political violence to galvanise new recruits on the basis of their superior status (as compared with the ‘armchair revolutionaries’ who are to be despised for being ‘all talk and no action’). This is the point Martin Gilleard, a violent extremist nationalist convicted of manufacturing nail bombs in 2008, makes when he explains his motivation and exhorts others to follow his example:

Be under no illusion, we are at war. And it is a war we are losing badly... I am so sick and tired of hearing nationalists talk of killing Muslims, of blowing up mosques, of fighting back... the time has come to stop the talk and start to act...

Our preliminary investigations of recent extremist nationalist criminal convictions like Gilleard’s suggest they warrant the description of political violence (and often its sub-category, terrorism). After such research it becomes apparent how insufficient the Runnymede notion of Islamophobia is to describe the phenomenon of post 9/11 anti-Muslim hate crime. By the same token hate crime appears to be a recent and inadequate term when it comes to describing the phenomenon of political violence which has been analysed and investigated for over a century in the UK. That said, while violent attacks committed by extremist nationalists against Muslim targets deserve to be categorised as political violence the greater number of violent attacks on Muslims by gangs and individuals with no allegiance to extremist nationalist or any other political ideology do not. In consequence terrorism and political violence against Muslim targets may be conceived as a sub-category of anti-Muslim hate crime.

We have encountered numerous cases where violent extremist nationalists have been convicted for racist attacks since 9/11 where evidence of anti-Muslim motivation or anti-Muslim hatred has been noted but sidelined. The following case reported in the Daily Mirror illustrates the point:

Simon Northfield, the boss of the Young National Front had an arsenal of weapons ready to torture black people when police nabbed him, a court heard yesterday. Simon Northfield, and six of his followers were arrested in their van as they lay in wait for victims. Their kidnap and torture kit included pillow cases, cable ties made into handcuffs, an axe, CS gas, a fake gun, a knuckle duster, screwdrivers, two extendable batons, two craft knives taped together, rubber gloves and balaclavas. An A-Z of London with a mosque circled was also found.

Typically clear evidence of an intention to harm Muslims (in this case Somalis) is seen in purely racist terms:

It is believed they planned to target black people at random after one of them had a run-in with Somalis in Tooting, South London. Police said: “They meant to cause real damage.” Photos of them dressed in Nazi and Ku Klux Klan outfits with weapons were discovered in raids on their homes and another man was arrested. They all admitted conspiracy to cause racially aggravated assault.

We justify this analysis of terrorism and political violence on the basis that violent extremist nationalism poses a similar risk to community relations as the al-Qaeda movement it seeks

to defeat. In both instances small fringe groups and individuals seek to resort to political violence and terrorist tactics as a compensation for their impotence in mainstream politics.

10. Hate crimes committed by individuals and gangs

The majority of anti-Muslim hate crimes in the UK do not appear to be committed by members or supporters of the EDL, BNP or their sister organisations and do not readily qualify as political violence for that reason. That said, there is clear evidence that many anti-Muslim hate crimes are motivated by an identical analysis of ‘radical Islam’ or ‘Muslim terrorists’ to that which informs EDL, BNP and extremist nationalist thinking. Thus a significant number of Muslims have been injured and mosques destroyed or damaged by individuals and gangs with no ostensible links to extremist nationalism but who share the same broad motivation or rationale for violence.

Interestingly, when an unaffiliated Muslim individual commits or attempts to commit an act of serious criminal violence against a target that has also been targeted by al-Qaeda inspired terrorists, commentators and analysts are quick to find or imagine links between the individual and the al-Qaeda terrorist movement. No such appetite exists in respect of serious anti-Muslim hate crimes. Instead they are often simply ignored.

In several towns across the UK gangs of youths and individuals carry out hate crimes and acts of vandalism against mosques and Muslim venues. We highlight a case in London where neo-conservative researchers and commentators have made a negative contribution to an analysis of the problem.

10.1 City University attack

In our London case study we addressed a gang attack on Muslim students at the City University in Islington, close to the City of London. It was significant in highlighting how multi-ethnic gangs often specifically target Muslims:

On Thursday, 5th November, 2009, three Muslim students were stabbed in an attack by a multi ethnic gang in a street near City University in the London Borough of Islington. These serious assaults were the culmination of a sustained campaign of violent intimidation by the same gang against Muslim students at City University that started on Monday, 2nd November.

A leading member of the Islamic student society (ISoc) highlighted the extent to which media, university and police misreported the attack:

...a lot of the media outlets who reported on it, and university statement...they were keen too...well, not keen, but they focused on the fact that it was a racial attack. And they said ‘Asian students.’ As opposed to the fact that it was clearly Muslim students! OK, most of the Muslim students are Asians, but the basis of the attack wasn’t that they were Asian. We mentioned that we were called ‘terrorists’ ‘suicide bombers’ and ‘pakis’ and things like that. Just all kinds of vile language. But almost all the initial outlets that were reporting on it...I think the BBC had an article on their website: ‘Asian students were attacked’. The university statement, even after we’d spoken with them: ‘Asian students were attacked.’ And it was a bit...: ‘Asian students??’ And then once we’d seen all this, we were a bit like: ‘Come on! Let’s tell it how it is!’

In a recent Quilliam briefing paper the Muslim identity of the ‘Asian’ students attacked at City University received the focus it failed to get in media, university and police reports of the attack. Predictably, however, the religious identity Muslims are invariably denied when they are viciously assaulted is ascribed to them when the focus turns to what Quilliam call the “problem of Islamist radicalisation on university campuses”. Displaying insensitive disregard

for the injuries and harm sustained by the City students the Quilliam report accuses the City University ISoc of using the attacks as “a valuable opportunity to promote their narrative of victimhood”. Rather, we suggest, the paper takes the opportunity to propagate Quilliam’s own ill-conceived campaign to stigmatise Muslim opponents:

...by interpreting these assaults in religious terms, the ISoc used them as evidence of societal Islamophobia and therefore reinforced their identity as ‘aggrieved’ Muslims who needed to isolate themselves on campus.

The Quilliam paper proceeds to report “one member of the ISoc” privately reporting:

...[t]he stabbing was not a racial or Islamophobic attack – it was not random but personal; they were a gang from a nearby estate who had a problem with the people they attacked.

This would appear to be an instance where the evidence undermines the claim it is being adduced to support. The multi-ethnic gang certainly was from a nearby estate and evidently did ‘have a problem’ with the Muslims they attacked and the prayer room they laid siege to. If the gang did not have a problem with Muslim students they would not have attacked them. In the circumstances, it is hard to fathom the logic of the anonymous author of the Quilliam paper. It is equally difficult to find the logical basis for the Quilliam claim that the ISoc leadership’s “ideological rejection of non-Muslims,” led them “to discourage their followers from cooperating with the police investigation” thereby “helping to cause the actual breakdown of the police enquiry”. It is difficult to envisage a better example of evidence being distorted to suit the reporter’s own ideological purpose.

Of course, there are sometimes problems between Muslim students and Jewish students and between Muslim and gay and lesbian students at City University as at other university campuses in the UK. Whereas the Quilliam report attaches fault and blame exclusively to the Muslim students our evidence suggests that problems of this kind are best resolved by adopting a more even handed approach. An excellent example of a more constructive problem solving approach was in evidence when we spoke at the annual Federation of Student Islamic Student Societies (FOSIS) conference at the London Muslim Centre in June 2010. Here Ben Whittaker, Vice-President (welfare) for the National Union of Students (NUS) emphasised the value of cross-cultural initiatives of the kind NUS and FOSIS were initiating. This covered interfaith, crime prevention, student safety, prayer room concerns for Muslim students, as well as the Prevent agenda. At least one leading member of the City University ISoc was in the audience to applaud this initiative.

The gulf between the NUS and FOSIS partnership approach and Quilliam’s accusatorial and divisive approach is wide indeed. We are sceptical about the evidence of violent extremism at the City ISoc Quilliam claim to have discovered. If, for the sake of argument, we accept it at face value, then we have to suggest that if FOSIS instead of Quilliam had been funded by government the problem would have been addressed and reduced. Instead Quilliam gives further licence to hate crimes against Muslims it labels extremist and further exacerbates campus tensions. No wonder Muslim students cheered loudly when Tariq Ramadan debunked the two Quilliam founders at a major ISoc event at Oxford University in May 2010.

A year on, a multi-ethnic gang that lives and operates in the immediate neighbourhood of City University remains at large. If they happen to read the Quilliam report they will feel vindicated and encouraged to repeat their attack on the Muslim students they wrongly identified as terrorists. According to our research findings threats of this kind increase when an al-Qaeda related terror threat is in the news headlines and pundits raise the issue to fever pitch. That is surely the case at the time of writing with Anwar Awlaki being mentioned

as a mastermind for a Yemen based terror plot against the US. Predictably, Quilliam jostle with their rivals at the Centre for Social Cohesion to establish guilt by association against mainstream UK Muslim organisations, ISocs and many others who have even the most tenuous 'links' to, or 'association' with Awlaki. Apart from providing a rationale and targets for violent anti-Muslim hate crimes this superficial approach to a serious problem is also problematic because it is selective and partial.

11. Increased anti-Muslim hate-crimes intimidation and violence since 9/11

The phenomenon of increased suspicion, hostility, bigotry, intimidation and violence towards Muslims in the UK can be traced back to 9/11. In the last twelve months we have interviewed Muslims with different theological, ethnic and cultural backgrounds in many parts of the UK and there is already significant evidence to suggest that 9/11 marks a dramatic and negative shift in attitudes and behaviour towards Muslims from within virtually all other sections of UK society, whether majority or minority communities themselves.

Incidents including the Bali bombings in 2002, the Madrid bombings in 2004, the London bombings (generally referred to as 7/7) in 2005, the terrorist incident at Glasgow airport in 2007, along with many other high profile terrorist incidents and reports of foiled terrorist attacks by 'home-grown Islamic extremists' in the UK, have served to re-enforce and amplify the adverse impact of 9/11 on Muslim communities in the UK. As we have already stressed, however, it has been the way these incidents have been reported and responded to rather than any intrinsic sense in which they reflect or represent the views or wishes of Muslims in the UK that has been problematic. Above all the war on terror has set the tone for creating a climate of fear in the UK in which suspicion directed towards fellow citizens who are Muslims has at times become intrusive and pejorative; creating negative stereotyping of the worst kind.

The terrorist act of 9/11 itself is therefore an insufficient explanation for a discernable rise in anti-Muslim hostility and violence but rather a necessary, explanatory condition. Such a conditional, causal link is not so much in direct relation to the act of terrorism itself but in the interpretation of the event and the responses to it. Most significant was a majority of mainstream UK political and UK media analysis and reporting that identified the suicide bombers' motivation as being grounded in Islam or a particular rendition of Islam. Even though several UK commentators sought to challenge and dispel this notion it became deeply embedded in the dominant public discourse.

Neither do we suggest that anti-Muslim bigotry did not exist before 9/11 but rather to seek highlight the extent to which the war on terror empowered and emboldened it. Since 11 September 2001 a significant yet unrecorded number of Muslims in the UK have been the victims of criminal violence and threats of criminal violence. For the major part non-Muslim assailants have attacked and abused their victims in the correct belief that they were Muslims, or in the case of attacks on mosques and Islamic institutions, in the sure knowledge that their target was a venue used exclusively by Muslims. That is to say, Muslims have invariably been attacked because of their identity as Muslims. In the majority of cases assailants have described their victims as 'Muslim terrorists' or in similar terms and their victims have often been left in little doubt that this pejorative and ill-founded link to terrorism was a prime motivation for the attack.

Victims, witnesses and investigators have explained how this view of Muslims as terrorists or in some broadly conceived way as being pejoratively connected to terrorism has been at the

heart of an alarming rise in what can best be described as anti-Muslim hate crime. Prior to the al-Qaeda terrorist attacks in New York and Washington there is virtually no evidence of violent attacks on Muslims 'as terrorists' in the UK. This is not to overlook the fact that Muslims have also on occasions been the victims of criminal violence since 9/11 where their assailants have been motivated either solely or partially by other factors.

Although many violent attacks have taken place in the immediate aftermath of terrorist incidents and media reports of incidents or events in which Muslims are portrayed in a negative light there has also been a consistent incidence of violence and intimidation against Muslims that is unrelated to specific events and which has led to a state of siege for many Muslim communities. This is significant because what little mainstream media attention there has been on the issue has tended to portray violent attacks on Muslims, mosques and Islamic institutions as part of an angry popular backlash against terrorist attacks carried out by Muslims. As we have noted, in sections of the mainstream media and sections of the political elite consistently negative portrayals of Muslims in general and the stigmatisation of politically active Muslims as extremist and subversive has created a climate in which intimidation and violence against Muslims has become warranted and routine.

Several interviewees talk about one of the most immediate indicators of a change in attitudes towards Muslims in the aftermath of 9/11: suspicion and hostility. In and of themselves suspicion and hostility do not constitute hate crimes or even matters for civil complaint although in many instances they serve as precursors to threatening behaviour, abuse, intimidation and violence. Moreover, although suspicion is often accompanied by discernable hostility it is not always the case and so the two responses warrant separate as well as dual consideration.

Suspicion is not unreasonable or problematic in most day to day situations. However, the kind of suspicion that many Muslims experienced for the first time after 9/11 is clearly both unreasonable and problematic. As these typical Muslim experiences illustrate:

I had been travelling on the train to Moorgate [from Harrow-on-the Hill] everyday for eighteen years and no one ever said bad things or gave me bad looks. Then all they [fellow commuters from the suburbs of Metro-land] were reading was Muslim terrorist this, Muslim terrorist that, and threats to London, and suicide bombs and everything and all of a sudden they see you as bad person, dangerous person....bad looks, don't sit next to me even when its only seat...yes small things only but when you travel everyday with these people you know straight away when things change for the worse.

For Muslims who had lived in the UK for several years prior to 9/11 the emergence of suspicion from strangers towards them for the first time was uncomfortable and disconcerting. For some this negative experience would be compounded when they overheard conversations in public places or in the work place that highlighted this new adverse perception of Muslims as a security threat. This negative experience might be compounded further still when overhearing the same kind of negative comments from colleagues or associates in the workplace or in other social settings.

Muslim interviewees with experience of life in the UK before and after 9/11 do not suggest that a terrorist incident in a foreign country in 2001 signalled a negative change of behaviour from all of their non-Muslim neighbours and fellow citizens but they do suggest that a negative change of attitude towards them was sufficiently widespread as to make a discernable and adverse impact on their lives.

While nearly all interviewees highlight the significance of 9/11 several others identify an increase in hostility against Muslims after 7/7. To a certain extent this reflects what is widely

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Since 9/11 arson, criminal damage, violence and intimidation against mosques, Islamic institutions and Muslim organisations has increased dramatically. Many mosques in isolated Muslim communities have become especially vulnerable.

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known as ‘backlash’ – an immediate response to an event such as 7/7 in which an increase in violence is discernable. The phenomenon of backlash was especially marked across the UK in the weeks after 7/7. However, for some of our interviewees 7/7 also serves to mark a change in attitudes and behaviour towards Muslims that would become more profound and long lasting.

12. Hate-crimes against mosques

We will be reporting more fully on hate-crimes against mosques, Islamic institutions and Muslim organisations in 2011. For the purposes of this report we will illustrate and summarise preliminary research findings based on interviews and observations in Muslim communities in Edinburgh, Glasgow, West Yorkshire, Greater Manchester, Merseyside, Wirral, West Midlands, East Midlands, Lincolnshire, Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Kent, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire, Wiltshire, Sussex, Surrey, Avon and Somerset, Devon and Greater London. In addition a questionnaire sent to over 1000 mosques, Islamic institutions and Muslim organisations in the UK has provided valuable data which we are analysing with a view to reporting more fully in 2011.

Since 9/11 arson, criminal damage, violence and intimidation against mosques, Islamic institutions and Muslim organisations has increased dramatically. Many mosques in isolated Muslim communities have become especially vulnerable. This research finding is significant because violent attacks on mosques, Islamic institutions and Muslim organisations invariably provide prima facie evidence of an anti-Muslim motive that defies obfuscation. When a multi-ethnic or minority-ethnic gang attack a mosque and its worshippers it should be sufficient to appreciate that the existing paradigms and typologies of racist hate crime are sometimes inappropriate and misleading. At the same time it is equally true that these kind of attacks impact on a particular faith community that is overwhelmingly made up of minority ethnic communities who are amongst the most socially and economically deprived in the UK.

To a large extent the difficulties that sometimes militate against establishing a clear anti-Muslim motive in connection with attacks in which individual Muslims are victims dissolve when analysing attacks on mosques, Islamic centres and Muslim organisations. Just as an attack on a vivisection laboratory provides prima facie evidence of an anti-vivisection motive or an attack on a synagogue is considered prima facie evidence of an anti-Semitic motive so too, we venture to suggest, does an attack on a mosque offer prima facie evidence of an anti-Muslim motive. This is not just an axiomatic or academic observation but one that has an important practical implication.

Following the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry in 1999 UK police were encouraged to give primacy to the perception of a minority ethnic victim concerning the motivation of the crime committed against them. That is to say, if the victim reported a crime as having a racist motivation then police should treat the victim’s perception as prima facie evidence that a racist motivation existed. However, that sense in which a victim of a hate crime is considered the key witness in an initial assessment of the motivation of an attack has never transferred readily into the investigation of crimes where Muslims are victims. On the contrary, in a number of cases the victims’ perception of anti-Muslim or Islamophobic motivation has been ignored in preference for another analysis altogether – police very often opting for a description of the incident as a racist or a random attack or failing to discern an ‘anti-Muslim’ sentiment (eg ‘Muslim terrorist’) as opposed to something more strictly anti-Islamic.

In contrast, an attack on a mosque is self evidently an attack on a building that sits at the

heart of a Muslim community and it is more difficult to confuse or conflate it with a racist or random attack. It is therefore disappointing to note that the level of police community awareness training (what some police interviewees have described as re-training) that went towards an improvement in the investigation of racist attacks and the support for victims of racist violence has not been replicated in the case of attacks against Muslims, their places of worship and congregation. That is not to overlook a significant number of cases reported to us by mosque managements where police support has been exemplary. Rather it is to acknowledge the outstanding work of countless community focused police officers up and down the country while emphasising that their pro-active grass roots work has not always been matched by their senior officers who have failed to promote and embed best practice nationally. As a result police performance has been patchy and uneven and allows for poor service in a number of instances.

Moreover, police performance in respect of investigations of attacks on mosques has sometimes been weak and would clearly benefit from the kind of specialist lead police chief John Grieve generated when he formed and led the Racial and Violent Crimes Task Force to improve the investigation of racially motivated crimes in London. In fairness, of course, whereas the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) had been encouraged by the Home Office to turn over a fresh page in the chequered history of policing minority ethnic communities, no such pressure was brought to bear in respect of police relations with Muslim communities.

How many out of approximately 1600 mosques, Islamic centres and Muslim organisations in the UK have been attacked since 9/11? Of those that have been attacked what kind of damage and injuries have been sustained? Our research project aims to answer these questions and others that will provide additional details about the phenomenon. At present, however, we can only offer a preliminary guide. So far, we have collated partial details on over 250 hate crimes at over 150 venues (mainly mosques but also Islamic centres and Muslim organisations) since 9/11. Attacks include petrol bombs thrown into mosques, serious physical assaults on imams and staff, bricks thrown through mosque windows, pigs heads being fixed prominently to mosque entrances and minarets, death threats, other threatening and abusive messages – sometimes verbal sometimes written – and vandalism.

Although much painstaking research lies ahead before we can provide an accurate picture, every early indication suggests that between 40% and 60% of the mosques, Islamic centres and Muslim organisations in the UK have suffered at least one attack that has or could have been reported to police as a hate crime since 9/11. Interestingly, while a significant number of mosques, Islamic centres and Muslim organisations have suffered no violence since 9/11 it is already perfectly clear that an equally significant number have suffered repeated attacks and ongoing vandalism and anti-social behaviour that amounts to intimidation. We aim to have a clearer picture by 11 September 2011, the tenth anniversary of 9/11. Even at our lowest estimate we may therefore be looking at figures in the region of 1000 hate crime attacks and incidents having taken place on at least 700 Islamic venues in the UK since 9/11 – and with a year still to go to the ten year anniversary of 9/11 further attacks can be anticipated.

An estimate of between 100 and 200 hate crimes against mosques, Islamic institutions and Muslim organisations since 9/11 is not unreasonable and probably highly conservative. It is too early to describe year on year patterns but it is safe to say that a significant number of attacks and incidents have taken place in each year since 9/11 and there is no sign of the problem diminishing.

Most disturbingly and less well known, several attacks have not been reported to police. Moreover, in some instances a failure to report attacks to police is prompted by a desire not to draw attention to the problem by trustees and staff at mosques and Islamic centres.

In the last two years a number of mosques, Islamic centres and Muslim organisations have also been subjected to intimidatory demonstrations and campaigns by violent protestors belonging to or associated with the English Defence League and other Islamophobic groups. Attacks and violent demonstrations against mosques, Islamic centres and Muslim organisations are just one part of an established and widespread decade long phenomenon in which many Muslims have come to feel under siege in their own country. Yet to date the government and police chiefs have been slow to assess the extent and nature of the problem.

In interviews for this report several imams at mosques in the UK have expressed deep sorrow when asked to recount the circumstances in which their own masjid had been attacked and damaged. One imam in particular spoke movingly about the tangible hurt Muslims felt when the 'House of Allah' they attended every day was attacked by a petrol bomb or desecrated in some other way. Over and above the damage, disruption and fear that is documented below is a profound sense of violation and religious sacrilege which devout members of other faiths will readily comprehend but which may require an empathetic effort from non-believers.

Throughout the last four decades the overwhelming majority of first generation Muslims in the UK have devoted themselves to working tirelessly in low paid jobs to provide homes and better futures for their families. For many their precious spare time has been spent converting buildings for use as mosques and prayer rooms. Later community projects were launched to fund the building of new mosques. In 2010, however, the majority of mosques in the UK are converted buildings, including several former churches and former pubs. After an attack there is an adverse impact on the morale of the local Muslim community that uses the mosque.

In our experience, ongoing intimidation of a public place of congregation is a defining feature of a breakdown of law and order. To illustrate it was only when the National Front was finally forced to abandon its provocative and intimidatory paper sales in Brick Lane in the early 1990s that the local Bangladeshi Muslim community was able to experience safe passage and congregation for the first time in their own neighbourhood. We have interviewed a sufficient number of responsible, reliable and compelling officials at mosques in different parts of the UK to be left in doubt that a significant number of Muslims are once again being put in fear of attack, abuse and harassment when attending their mosques to pray and socialise.

12.1 Arson

Arson consists of setting a building ablaze with criminal intent. Most cases of arson we have investigated reveal a callous disregard for the safety of Muslims who are or who might reasonably be expected to be inside the building being attacked. In our London case study we reported the bravery Mohamed Koheeeallee, the caretaker of the Greenwich Islamic Centre who was injured defending the mosque and rescuing a copy of the Qur'an. To recall, the mosque was petrol bombed twice in one week in 2009:

A brave caretaker was hurt as he risked his life to save a mosque torched by arsonists in the second petrol bomb attack in a week. Mohamed Koheeeallee, 62, raced to tackle 7ft flames at the Greenwich Islamic Centre in Plumstead Road at 12.15am on Tuesday. Grabbing a bucket of water, he extinguished the fire as it spread inside but when he opened a fire exit, he was engulfed by flames burning his arm and his face. Choking with smoke inhalation and despite his injuries, he carried

on dousing the fire until the mosque was safe but when he tried to tackle the source of the blaze he was pushed back by its intensity. Holy texts, including the most sacred in Islam – the Qur'an – were burned.

Mr. Koheeeallee's bravery extended beyond his heroics in tackling the blaze but also in maintaining a twenty four hour presence inside the building ever since. Sadly, we have encountered arson attacks against mosques, Islamic institutions and Muslim organisations in most parts of the UK we have visited. In venues we have visited arson attacks have left their mark both physically and psychologically. Not all victims show the same courage as Mr. Koheeeallee but all show a degree of stoicism and resignation. Not all cases of arson are petrol bomb attacks but the majority are.

If petrol is poured through the letter box of a mosque or other target premises it will qualify as arson and not necessarily as a petrol bomb attack although the distinction may be arbitrary. In any event it is a common enough occurrence as illustrated in this case we encountered at a mosque in Falkirk:

It was three year ago, ...and someone put their petrol in the letter box, through letter box in the door. Yeah, in the night time. ... I remember, it was bad weather out there, and ah, unluckily our system is not working that time, you know like, but cameras..things like that, it doesn't work that time, so...

12.2 Petrol bomb attacks

In the UK as elsewhere in Europe the tactic of petrol bombing the homes, places of work, places of congregation and places of worship of a minority community is symptomatic and symbolic of political violence. At the present time it is impossible to estimate how many petrol bomb attacks against mosques, Islamic institutions and Muslim organisations have taken place in the UK in the last decade, still less how many deserve to be classified as political violence. What we can say with certainty is that a sufficient number of petrol bomb attacks have taken place and been reported in local newspapers as to warrant a level of serious concern amongst national and local politicians that has not been evident to date.

Most victims of this kind of attack reported petrol bombs being thrown into mosques in the hours of darkness, as in this case in Edinburgh:

A fire attack is a few years ago when it was happen in America, the 9/11 ...a very difficult time for all the Muslims especially. ...is a one young guy at that time, is student studying near the High School, the Roman High School. At night time he came here and through the window, throw the petrol bomb. Petrol bomb. And at midnight...

In many mosques worshippers and staff can be inside the building at such at a time but thankfully in this case the building was empty. Damage, however, can be long lasting:

And that is about damages, damaged the carpet, right, carpet, so much smoke coming through the windows, smoke ...the water which is all of the damage, because smoke is everywhere. Is a colour change, is black, ...always the smoke. The guy is arrested ...and at that time, it's the first to happen in Britain, I think so, is attack in the Mosque, and all the TV, newspaper.

This particular attack received national media attention because it was the first of its kind after 9/11. It is also one of the few cases where the culprit was arrested and convicted. Since then most petrol bomb attacks on mosques have generally only received attention in the local media. A mosque representative showed us the residual damage to a petrol bomb attack at a mosque in Nottingham:

...this partition through the other side is for women, for women praying. So this was all, this was all smashed. ...as well but we thought that they were so damaged that these might have to come down and the whole roof, I mean, to be replaced, but thank Allah this wouldn't need to do anything like that. This was restored them as they are. But this all fell down here...

We have encountered several cases where loss of life and serious harm was narrowly avoided as in this interview at a mosque in Bathgate, West Lothian:

...somebody did put a petrol bomb but luckily he throw it through the back window at the back, back of the building was belong to the mosque. But that wasn't our window, just to be where the building was situated, when he look you would think actually that,... is a part of our property but I say luckily, but luckily for us, that was a toilet of next door.

Unintended consequences are a regular feature of arson attacks whatever the target or motivation:

...so they broke the window and put the petrol bomb in there. So the toilet and I think everything got melted, and a pipe go burst, and the shop was wrecked. That was next to us. But that could have been at the mosque...nothing was done to the mosque, err, not to the shop. The toilet, basically, the toilet seat and the flushing point, the tile thing, that was all melted. ...the pipe melted, the tap melted, and the water flushed to the floor, and they started to come down. So, basically, all the offices and everything was wrecked, 'cos that happened during the night some time...there was actually water damage there, and next day when they came to open the shop, they noticed there was a disaster...the whole area could have been a disaster, not just for the mosque...because it is all linked, like I think it was eight or nine shops, and then it was some houses and flats. You know, everybody could have been dead.

12.3 Petrol bomb attacks - use of accelerant

One potential indicator that a petrol bomb attack has been carried out by violent extremist nationalists or others with an extremist political motive is the use an accelerant. Whereas most mosque representatives we have interviewed have been unable to comment authoritatively about the identity and political affiliations of perpetrators of petrol bombings of their mosques, Abdal Qadir Baksh, a spokesman for the Masjid al Ghurabaa, a salafi mosque in Luton, was far more insightful. Before engaging with his account it is worth setting the scene. The mosque was firebombed in the aftermath of extremist political activity in Luton. As we have already noted the EDL and local extremist nationalists like Paul Ray were at the hub of protests in Luton purportedly in response to a provocative demonstration against returning British troops by an affiliate of extremist group al-Muhajiroun.

Baksh has strong links in the community and is convinced the attack was connected to these protests. He also understood the potential significance of the use of an accelerant:

...we had a major incident where our Mosque was fire bombed. But those who did this act actually used some form of accelerant [...] which made the bomb really bigger than a normal fire bomb. It actually blew down a whole wall, collapsed it onto another wall, and that is not normal of normal fire bombs. Forensics came back and told us that something was used in there. And we knew they couldn't get hold these accelerants except from professional people, people who know what they're doing. So it was organised. They knew what they were doing.

Once again the attack occurred at night yet with real potential to cause fatalities. Baksh explains:

...about 2 o'clock in the morning, I think, smashed the window, threw the bombs in and ran off. Fortunately there was nobody there at the time, at 2 o'clock in the morning; however, our morning

prayer was at that time was about 4 o'clock at that time and only two hours away from somebody actually being there. And also, in the month Ramadan, I'm sorry, in the summer periods, a lot of our community sometimes sleep over night, because the time period between Isha and Fajr is quite close and the place where that bomb struck is actually the place where they sleep. It's a library area, a nice library area. Also had that bomb been done in the daytime, 4 or 6 in the evening, that sort of time, there would have been mass casualties because that library is used and adjacent to the mosque is used for teaching children. ...so the affects of this could have been a lot more worse...The whole two walls came down ... the inside was burnt out, it just, was, basically, the whole room burnt out, and two walls come down, I'd say about 20, 25 thousand pounds worth of damage.

As in many other interviews, Baksh expresses satisfaction with the emergency services, the fire brigade and the police responses to the incident itself but less satisfaction with the subsequent investigation:

...the fire brigade had to be called to extinguish the fire and then our members got here as quickly as possible. The place was cordoned off. Loads of forensic tests. But nobody was caught. I don't believe enough effort was put into finding out the arsonists anyway.

This is also a typical case where a mosque experienced prior hate crimes:

But even that, it was clear that it was an attack on Islam and was a planned for attack [because] ... prior to that attack we were threatened a number of times. About half a dozen times, through letters, through hate mail. And the hate mail was really, really bad, against Islam, against our Prophet Mohammad, against Allah, against us, threatened to kill us, wipe us off Bury Park.

Here, Baksh, a convert (or revert) to Islam, shows a stronger grasp of extremist politics than most other interviewees:

Someone somewhere, those who were behind the bomb, they assumed we were with extremist groups, like Al-Muhajiroun ... Al-Jihad ... so on an so forth, and they assumed this, and I don't know how. Because our dawa, our call, is actually quite the opposite and we're the only ones, in Luton, actually openly refuting these deviant rumours, no other mosque does that. But even with that we still receive their anger and their hatred for Muslims but you know the simple reason, probably, is that they don't read themselves, they're just a bunch of bandits, gangsters, you know, someone's filled their mind with hatred and they've gone out and done this, this act. They didn't even want to try and establish, what, you know, are these people really guilty of this crime that people claim their guilty of? So we should fire bomb them? They didn't even do that. That shows me that the people who, the individuals who perpetrate the crime, are drug dealers, people on drugs, people who need money, but the people behind them who got them to do it, the brains behind it, those are the people that we really need to catch. We need to find out how.

This local knowledge and political analysis extended to the possible identity of the bombers:

We have a very good idea, as a matter of fact we know who they are but we can't prove it, we know the brains behind it and number two who actually did it, so, but we can't prove it but so, we have to abide by the law of the land and so we just be patient and forebear the hardship that we're undergoing. We took it to them [the police] but there was not evidence, enough to conviction or even go to them and question them.

Despite this frustration concerning the police investigation the mosque chairman struck a positive note:

But anyway it's something we should put behind us now, we're moving on and I think our position vis-à-vis extremism and radicalisation and hate issue is a lot more clearer now because since then we've stepped up our clarification of what we really have been about all these years and people no longer associate us with extremists. In a way, you know, it was a blessing in disguise actually, because

it allowed our message to out now, wider and farther, to everybody in Luton and outside Luton that this mosque is completely nothing to do with these extremists and you know violent radicals.

12.4 Injury, harm, damage and disruption caused by fire bombings

Baksh explains the nature and extent of the impact of a fire bombing:

For a good three weeks we weren't allowed access to the mosque, not allowed to pray there. You know, we're Muslims, we pray five times a day. No classes there, all education had ceased. All the classes for the kids, the Qu'ran, all Arabic, had ceased. And then, after that, once we had access, we had limited access. So again, we got the space back but we weren't able to continue the classes. And then we had to wait for insurance and everything for all that to get in place. And only then were we able to get working on it, and that took quite a long time, but eventually, about February the following year, everything had finished.

We have recorded similar accounts at mosques, Islamic centres and Muslim organisations in different parts of the UK.

12.5 Fear caused by fire bombings

In Luton the firebombing of the mosque combined with the impact of a violent EDL demonstration to cause fear in the community:

Yeah, psychologically. Muslims now walking in the streets... raise their eyebrows in fear, especially if they're walking in town. walking in the streets, women covered up ... its created dislike and hatred, you know, between Muslims and non-Muslims in general. And we found when Muslims now speak to non-Muslims, we're always, "well what's his real opinion behind this", "what does he really think of me". Whereas previously it wouldn't have been there. ... We haven't found not one English organisation condemns the acts and when it happened no one ever speaks.

Whereas in Tower Hamlets and other areas in the UK strong inter-faith relations can provide the basis for valuable community support at times of crisis in Luton it was lacking when it was needed:

And when 7/7 happened, same thing happened. And when this [fire]bomb attack happened, no church ever stood up, no councillors, it was considered just a normal arson attack. That was it. And that was really sad. And what we had to do was go out and create some waves. Make the councillors start thinking, we had to invite them to a huge meeting.

According to Baksh, the best way to get council attention was to focus on extremist Muslims who the petrol bombers were supposed to be targeting:

What can you do about these extremists, Al-Muhajiroun, because we believe they were the cause of all this. So everyone false accusations went on, and Al-Muhajiroun are the real cause, what should they be doing? And only then some of the councillors then spoke and said 'yeah it was wrong', and it should have ever happened and we should find the culprits. We had to create this, because deep down we knew they would speak, but we don't think they spoke enough. And that's another very sad thing.

Baksh continues, highlighting increased attacks on Muslim women in the street:

Now its sort of calmed down a bit, time has healed, people are starting to be a bit more adventurous and go back to their normal life. But those first two years, it was very, very scary. Woman had stones thrown at them, spat at, slapped in the face. These are sisters, they cant stand it when they see them. They would come to us, saying 'can we call the police?' Call them up, but then you'll nothing about it.

Baksh argues for more work to tackle Islamophobia:

There's not enough being done to deal with Islamophobia. Not enough being done at all. We

need to have an Islamophobia Relations Office, or something of that nature, which should be in everybody's face, in the police, in the face of the council, the workplace, every single factory, education, dissemination of knowledge how you should treat Muslims, there needs to be that so people don't think Islam is so strange. There's 2 billion millions ... in a 5 billion, 6 billion population in the world, I mean, what does that tell you? It tells you clearly: how can you think of us as something strange? We're almost half the population of the world: how can you think of the hijab or the jibab as something strange? The only thing that really, truly, conclusion I can come to is the teachings, they hate Islam itself, not the people who are wearing it. But their anger is at the people who are adhering to it.

Baksh's plea is echoed by his colleague Farasat Latif who was interviewed about the same firebombing in *The Independent*.

Farasat Latif was taking his daughter to school when he found out that the mosque he ran in Luton had been firebombed by right-wing extremists. In the middle of the night two men in a stolen silver BMW had driven up to the Masjid Al Ghurabaa in the Bury Park area and poured petrol through a side window before making their getaway. For Mr Latif that awful morning was a watershed moment. Firstly he had to gently inform six-year-old Ruqayah that there would be no lessons for the next few weeks because her school, which was on the top floor of the mosque, had been damaged in the fire. Then he had to explain to her why someone would even want to set fire to a mosque in the first place.

Latif captures the parental anguish involved in such a situation:

"I had always tried to shield my daughter from the idea that there are people out there who simply do not like Muslims," the 39-year-old said. "But it wasn't long before she worked it out. That day installed in her a "them and us" mentality – something I hoped she would never have."

Baksh and Latif belong to a section of the Muslim community that has a good track record of tackling hate crime and violent extremism of all kinds. It should therefore come as no surprise that they are considered unfit for the task by Quilliam and their neo-conservative sponsors. In contrast, this media report in *The Independent* is sympathetic:

Mr Latif's Masjid Al Ghurabaa follows the Salafi school of thought, the socially conservative Saudi sect in which male adherents tend to grow long beards and dress in simple tunics and women usually adopt the full-length niqab veil. "To outsiders we come across as very traditional," he says. "We don't listen to music – my wife and I, for instance, wouldn't go to a wedding if there was music playing. But that doesn't make us extremists. Islam teaches people to strongly believe in social cohesion and strictly prohibits shedding any innocent blood. The hot-headed young men that belong to Al Muhajiroun promote violence and preach a false version of Islam that reflects badly on ordinary Muslims. That's why we took action."

Latif concluded his interview with this powerful observation:

I believe people on all sides are sick of the extremists," he said. "I now hope the white working class will weed out the fascists and hate mongers just like we now have. Otherwise things will only get worse.

This plea for equality of treatment between two opposing groups of extremists is one we echo in our recommendations to government and police.

12.6 Police investigations of arson attacks

Notwithstanding a generally high standard several police investigations of arson attacks on mosques appear to have suffered from a lack of resources. There are also indications that in some cases there has been a lack of police awareness about the wider threat that mosques,

Islamic institutions and Muslim organisations face from political extremists. This is an area of research we intend to develop in 2011.

12.7 Police support for firebombed mosques

Police support for mosques, Islamic institutions and Muslim organisations that have suffered arson attacks has generally been excellent in all parts of the UK we have visited. In many instances visible patrols and close liaison with mosques has been established. In a small minority of cases where police support has been lacking there is evidence that the failure undermines fragile community confidence.

12.8 Political support for firebombed mosques

The view we presented from Luton that political support has been lacking is mirrored in other parts of the UK we have visited. This lack of tangible support has led to a growing sense of isolation in some communities. Several interviewees expressed the view that government awareness of the problem has been lacking. There have been countless opportunities for government ministers to visit the scenes of attack and to show solidarity and support with Muslim communities but the political will to do so has appeared to be absent.

12.9 Criminal assaults in vicinity of mosques

There should, we argue, be a greater recognition that Muslims often face a significant risk of being victims of anti-Muslim hate crimes in the vicinity of mosques. Instead, in many instances, there is a collective failure – police, political, media – to recognise that gangs and individuals either target Muslims near their places of worship or simply identify their victims as Muslims because of the location and carry out an attack on that basis. In the past there has been a similar blind spot when identifying racist hate crimes but whereas that has, in most instances, been rectified there appears to be a need for greater community awareness, especially on the part of police.

In January we reported on the case of Ikram Syed ul-Haq, a retired care worker, who became a murder victim when he died from brain injuries he sustained in an anti-Muslim gang attack outside his local mosque in Tooting, south London. To recap:

On the evening of 31 August Ikram, described by his friends as a quiet, kind and compassionate man, was with his three-year-old granddaughter Marian ul-Haq when a gang savagely beat him to the ground. “Witnesses said the hysterical toddler [his granddaughter] ran screaming into the Idara-e-Jaafariya Islamic centre in Church Lane, Tooting, south London, at around 9pm” when “most of the congregation were still inside as they shared a meal to break their Ramadan fast”.

The gang assaulted other victims outside the mosque. According to a newspaper report “one of the other victims described how a gang of 20 teenagers in hoodies ambushed them outside the mosque, on Church Lane, as they emerged from a prayer session”. Minicab driver Imdad Buhkari, 39, who was standing with another victim, who is in his 70s, said:

They came down the road and about six of them broke off from the rest and surrounded the two of us. They asked me for the time. I said I don't wear a watch and suddenly someone from behind punched me hard on the jaw. I was attacked from behind with no warning. Then they hit the old man, whose name is Atameer, and ran off... I went round the corner and I was shocked when I saw Ikram lying unconscious on the ground. He was bleeding from his mouth and ear. Now he is in a coma. The doctors want to turn off his life support machine but his family say no. It is terrible. Who would do such a thing?

In July 2010 Leon Elcock, 16, and 15-year-old Hamza Lyzai were jailed for the attack. However, both in court and in the media no mention was made of any anti-Muslim motivation. Instead the case was reported as one of random 'happy slapping'. According to a well informed Muslim youth worker in the neighbourhood there was in fact a strong likelihood that the gang was motivated at least in part by an antipathy towards Muslims at the Tooting mosque. This is an area we hope to investigate further in 2011. For now we highlight the fact that in numerous cases of violent crime around the UK insufficient attention is given to the issue of anti-Muslim sentiment and motivation.

12.10 Criminal assaults on Muslims travelling to and from mosques

Criminal assaults on Muslims travelling to and from mosques sometimes provide prima facie evidence of an anti-Muslim motivation. In relatively isolated Muslim communities gangs of youths will often assault, abuse and intimidate Muslims when they are travelling to pray at the mosque or when returning home. Thus in Boston, Lincolnshire:

A few days ago, ...soon after Maghrib prayer, actually they came before Maghrib prayer and they were just looking from outside to our car park and then soon after Maghrib prayer and the doctor, he finished his prayer and he left the mosque, and 3/4 guys on motorbikes they chased that guy and they were shouting you know to him and all those things... he was driving, he was in his car.

There can be no doubting the sense of fear and intimidation that arises in individuals and small Muslim communities like the one in Boston when these kind incidents occur:

So these guys were on motorbike but they were shouting at him, you know...they were just, you know, giving some gesture, you know, like, like hate and it was clearly showing that they were intentionally chasing ...Muslim guy just to show their hate that they don't like Muslims in this country.

12.11 Intimidation of mosques, Islamic centres and Muslim organisations

What begins as occasional anti-social behaviour and vandalism can become harassment and intimidation when it is purposefully pursued over a sustained period. In such circumstances it can have a serious negative impact that is far greater than the individual acts themselves would suggest. This is just one example from Bishops Stortford where a mosque has endured ongoing vandalism, attacks and assaults over a long period at three separate venues in the town. It is worth following the mosque representative's account. Initially he is describing the state of siege that is evoked by boarding up windows that are constantly being broken by acts of vandalism:

We had just boarded stuff all around. It looked like it's not a mosque; it's not a holy place. It's like a vandalised building or somewhere in the middle of nowhere. It wasn't like a building in the centre of the town. Well, I think the majority of the people...because kids used to walk around there from school; and later on they used to get into bunches and into little mini-gangs. And they used to come and attack and throw stones and they [would] just abuse sometimes...people. And chase them.

Acts of minor anti-social behaviour gradually escalated:

There was a skate board thing as well there. So they used to skate around there and then just finish and come. And they used to dump all their garbage there as well, sometimes. And for the first few months, we were OK. Because not too many people knew that we moved here, there were less people coming for prayers. But once we bought this new building (where we are now) which is a much bigger building [with] a capacity of up to three/four hundred people...we can squeeze in three hundred, at least...maybe not four hundred, but...upstairs, downstairs...everywhere. That's when it started. The

youngsters used to come and they used to see too many people going into the mosque.

The mosque trustees were encouraged to move the mosque to another venue by the council. That was the council response to the problem – move the mosque. The mosque duly moved but the vandals simply followed too:

That was last year; I would say it was in the summer. I can't exactly remember which month. But summer 2009. And then nothing happened for a while. The imam who was there at that time... he's not the imam at the moment; that was a different imam. He saw the guys running and he recognized them. Then (as I said) everything calmed down for a bit. Then one day, it was (I think) about two or three weeks later, after that attack when they threw the brick through the window...it was around (I think) Maghrib time...nine o'clock, something like that. People were still there. I think it was Maghrib time, there was plenty of people in the mosque and a gang of about twelve to fifteen young kids...

Asked how old the attackers were the mosque official replied:

I'd say between fifteen/sixteen to about twenty years old. There was one or two oldish guys but the majority of them were teenage...in their teens. Teenagers. And they just opened the door and they start kicking everything. Outside, the shutter and making a lot of noise. And they were swearing, that: 'You terrorists!' And: 'You this' and 'Get out from here, otherwise we will blow this...we will burn this place.' And: 'We want to kill you. Come outside.' They [Muslims] got really frightened. They [attackers] made comments like this and they said: 'We don't want a mosque here; we want you out from here. We don't want nobody Muslim living in this town. You get out from here.' Then nobody came out from the mosque; obviously they were frightened. I was working here and I saw them. When they finished from there...and I was making an order and the door was shut. And the lady who was working, she said: 'There is trouble in the mosque. Somebody's banging...'

A serious attack on the mosque and its worshippers developed:

She looked out and she said: 'They're doing something to the mosque; trouble in the mosque.' Then I came through here and by the time I went through here, they were crossing from here. The guy's right in front of me and I saw them. They had cans of beer in their hands and they were still swearing. And I just looked at them and made eye contact with them and tried to stop them but they were...people from the cab office, they were worried as well. So they said to me: 'No, don't do anything. Let them go.' And they went. We called the police. The police came. They were trying to chase them but they were running left, right and centre. To be honest, police did not help that day. I don't know why. They could have arrested them; they were not too far from the police. They were within the reach of the police. But police didn't...you know...

Next, the imam was attacked:

...The imam wasn't (what I would say) a typical imam, keeps himself...he was British born guy; he was always mixing up with people. And he was not just sitting in the mosque. He was going about and meeting people and talking. He was quite friendly as well. They knew him as well, because he was always seen in the town, around there. So they try and attack him. There was two or three more guys; they were coming out of the mosque. I think that was about an hour later, because that was Maghrib time. Sorry, Isha. Some of them stayed after Maghrib in there and some other guys, they came for Isha as well. So they came back after one hour. In the meantime, police didn't do nothing about it. They came to the bridge as well, and they were saying that: 'We will kill you!' And: 'We will do this' and they were making remarks like this. And then they came [a] second time; they attacked [the] imam and the imam was running around like, because...

The police response was poor:

Yes around...he came that way, then he came and he went into the takeaway there. And then they

went over the bridge again because he called the police again. And they knew the police is coming; you could hear the siren, you know? When the police came: 'Oh who? Where they gone? Who they were?' I said: 'The same people who attacked earlier on! I showed them to you. They were there.' The police officer is just looking at me. I felt so helpless that time, because if you see a person that's doing something wrong and he's a criminal and [the] law is there...and if [the] law don't do nothing about it...you feel very helpless.

In consequence, the mosque representative was left feeling bitterly disappointed:

The police...they were on the other side...they were calling police to come: 'We'll do you as well!' And the other car came from the other side. And the police car is this side...the police car is that side; I don't know, maybe two cars that side. They still couldn't get hold of them. They did arrest a couple of guys, maybe two or three hours after. And they said: 'You come and recognize them.' The imam did and he did identify them and everything. But I don't think anything happened there.

Like many other mosque officials who have experienced the same violence he expressed deep disappointment – compounded in this case and many others because the mosque official enjoys good relations with scores of non-Muslim neighbours in the neighbourhood:

The problem is this should never happen. Because being a Muslim is no shame and no harm to anybody. If a Muslim is doing something wrong, then yes, you can say that is wrong. People go to mosques to pray. We come out; we just go on our ways. Wherever we want to go. We don't make no trouble. If you go to a Jumu'ah Salah, there are hundreds of people there. But within five...maximum ten minutes...clear. Like there was nobody there. You go to the nightclub there, it is four or five hundred people come out from there...stabbing and there is fighting and there is so many different things taking place...police running left, right and centre. Nobody stops that or nobody says: 'This is wrong.' But why we should stop going to a mosque? Why shouldn't we have a mosque in the town?

The sense of intimidation at the mosque has not diminished:

After that incident happened, there was another attack. The first one was the breakthrough. The second one was the major one, when the whole gang came and attacked. The third time they came because the police said: 'You put CCTV; you this and you put that.' So they did put that; cameras there and everything there. Late last year, I think it was. I don't think it was this year, it was late last year. They came and they put a pig's head on the camera and they said: 'We are the ones who are doing it.' It's on the CCTV camera. You can recognize the people.

The council too have been slow to recognise the extent to which the mosque is being subjected to long term harassment and intimidation. Instead of tackling the culprits the council suggests the mosque should move again to another venue. The evidence of anti-Muslim hate crimes is crystal clear:

People [had] been told: 'Get out from here. We don't want Muslims here. You go back to where you come from. This is not a Muslim country.' Things like this...

12.12 Pig's head over the CCTV camera

We have so far documented forty two cases where pig's heads, bacon and pork have been used in a variety of ways to signal anti-Muslim hatred at mosques, Islamic institutions and Muslim organisations since 9/11. The intimidation at the Bishops Stortford mosque has also involved this form of attack, placing a pig's head over the CCTV camera:

They spoke and they said: 'Here's this for you.' Because they know the Muslims don't eat pork or pig, you know? I don't know if it was pig feet or a pig's head. I think it was a pig's head. Yeah, a pig's head, they put on the camera. That was [the] third time, which we reported to the police. And...

as far as I can see, whenever something happens in the media...then these groups...I don't know who they're supported by, who they're pushed by...they just come out, to do this against the people, against Muslims.

In other cases a pig's head has been displayed prominently on the mosque, even on the minaret. In addition bacon and pork are sometimes shoved through letter boxes at mosques and even sent by post. In the same way copies of the Qur'an will often be defaced with obscenities and delivered to a mosque.

Many mosque officials have explained how these kinds of attack cause additional offence. "I don't mind being called Paki" one imam explained, "but the Qur'an is the word of Allah'.

12.13 Pig's head outside North London Central Mosque

Police first began to record attacks against the North London Central Mosque (NLCM) – better known as Finsbury Park Mosque – in 2002. A defaced Qur'an was sent to the mosque in July 2002 and the sender chose to write BNP slogans inside it. Since then the mosque has been a regular target for violent extremist nationalists.

It is a reasonable line of enquiry to consider whether the individuals who stuck a pig's head on the railings outside the mosque – during the hours of darkness between 19 and 20 July 2010 were motivated wholly or in part by media coverage erroneously linking the mosque to support for al-Qaeda terrorism. Certainly the mosque has suffered scores of hate crimes since 9/11 and in most instances the perpetrators are not reticent in declaring the nature of their motivation. Indeed, when the extremist Abu Hamza and his supporters were in de facto control of the mosque it was not altogether unreasonable to associate the building with support for al-Qaeda terrorism. However, as local MP Jeremy Corbyn and local councillor Andy Hull have been quick to point out, since February 2005 the NLCM has been under new management that has performed superbly well, tackling hate crime and anti-social behaviour of all kinds and restoring the good name the mosque it aspired to when Prince Charles first opened it:

Half a decade on since the days of Abu Hamza, a lot has changed in Finsbury Park. North London Central Mosque is now a beacon in the north Islington community. The management and congregation are doing sterling work in the area, not just for local Muslims but with their non-Muslim neighbours too. What was once a place of hatred and division is now one of pride and progress. The cowards and criminals who stuck a pig's head on the mosque's railings in the dead of night last week should be ashamed of themselves. There is no place for such bigotry and sacrilege in our ward, which is home to people of every culture and creed, and is brighter and better for it. – Councillor Andy Hull, Labour Party member for Highbury West, Islington Town Hall, Upper Street, N1.

It is not just the BNP, EDL and the perpetrators of this sacrilegious hate crime who disagree with Hull's assessment. Ever since the new mosque management courageously ended the violent extremists' control of the mosque they have been subjected to a constant barrage of accusations and criticisms from neo-conservative think tanks and their media allies. While the leading neo conservative think-tank Policy Exchange has become more reticent in making false or misleading allegations against mosques and Muslim organisations since being forced to make apologies under weight of civil litigation their attack dogs at less accountable, US registered blog sites such as Harry's Place have been eager to seize the mantle. Thus, typically, regular Harry's Place blogger Lucy Lips – writing in a style reminiscent of Quilliam researcher Lucy James and the anonymous author of Quilliam's City University case study – seeks to perpetuate an entirely false allegation made by Andrew Gilligan and Labour MP

Khalid Mahmood that the mosque hosted “a talk by the Al Qaeda recruiter, Awlaki, which Abdulmutallab the Undiebomber may have attended.” Only the most ideologically driven activist would decline to retract such a serious claim when faced with a full and compelling account from the NLCM trustees:

Let us be perfectly clear: neither Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab nor Anwar al-Awlaki has ever been invited to attend NLCM since we took charge of the mosque in February 2005. We can be certain that neither man has been given a platform at the mosque in any form and in the case of Anwar al-Awlaki we can be confident that he would not have been able to enter the mosque without his presence being brought to our attention and we do not think that he visited the UK between 2006 and 2007 because he was in jail as mentioned before. In his eagerness to denigrate NLCM Khalid Mahmood has repeated an American reporter's mistake based on a failure to grasp basic London geography. It would be uncharitable but not unreasonable to suggest that Khalid Mahmood does not know whereabouts in London Finsbury Park is any more than the US reporter. It is certainly difficult to find anyone who has ever seen him in Finsbury Park. In that respect at least he has something in common with Anwar al-Awlaki and Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab. Khalid Mahmood needs to understand that his false claims may have the unintended consequence of boosting support for violent extremism against NLCM which in turn will fuel violent extremism of the kind that used to be fostered within the mosque when Abu Hamza's supporters were in charge.

Such is the irreconcilable divide between the day to day reality of life in Finsbury Park, London, N4 and the parallel universe occupied by blogs such as Harry's Place that the anonymous Lucy Lips fails to notice how her pejorative analysis is the same as the one adopted by EDL, BNP and the sundry violent extremist nationalists who regularly threaten the mosque with violence. In this respect she reveals the same blind spot as the anonymous author of the City University case study (see 10.1 above). Testing the limits of logic she argues, wrongly, that the mosque trustees only blame her and her neo-conservative associates and not the “neo Nazis” who carry out hate crimes against the mosque. If Lucy Lips had examined the threats, abuse, hate mail and records of attacks on the mosque that we have then she would find it difficult to sustain her argument. On the contrary the mosque knows only too well that threatening and abusive letters of the kind sent regularly to the mosque (an example is displayed below) are written by individuals with a lower intellect than those who write propaganda for Harry's Place and their extensive network.

Similarly, Quilliam, a close ally of Harry's Place and part of the same network, works tirelessly to smear the NLCM and many other effective mosques and Muslim organisations. Promoted to become Quilliam's sole executive director upon Ed Husain's departure, Maajid Nawaz has been quick to promote and slow to refute the same false allegations of ‘guilt by association’ made against the trustees of the North London Central Mosque. Ignoring the mosque's refutation Nawaz repeated on Sky TV that “the North London Mosque [NLCM] has recently been accused in parliament by one of its former trustees Khalid Mahmood MP as having hosted Abdulmutallab the Christmas day bomber and Anwar al-Awlaki the Al Qaeda theoretician” either knowing this to be false or being indifferent to the truth. Sadly, for the wider public including the gangs and individuals who perpetrate hate crimes against mosques and Muslims, Nawaz, Husain, Gilligan, Phillips, et al have become voices of authority.

12.14 Bricks, stones, eggs and other missiles

The most common kind of attack we have encountered involve missiles, invariably bricks and stones, sometimes eggs, being thrown through or at mosque windows and doors. Very often this will be done by gangs who do not attempt to hide. At other times it will be carried out by gangs and individuals when the mosque is empty and the damage is discovered later.

At several mosques we have visited windows are no longer replaced because they are so regularly broken. Instead windows and doors are boarded up and the building often looks as the worshippers feel: under siege. For instance, in Harlow the mosque has had every single window smashed “even though [they] were reinforced, double glazed and had a metal cage around them. The mosque representative explained that as soon as they put in a fresh pane of glass it got smashed straight away. Harlow has a strong BNP and extremist nationalist presence that adds to the sense of siege for the small Muslim community.

FINSBURY MOSQUE
7-11 ST THOMAS'S ROAD
LONDON
N4 2QH

To all you tererists that call yourself muslims. The world is sick of you.

I agree with the BNP. You comit inestwith your sisters. Mohammed was the son of a hoare and a perv - he had many partners - like a rent boy.

I am the only profit islam is a joke and those who follow it are mad.

In this case in Boston a gang of youths regularly throw eggs at the mosque:

Yes, around 10.29pm. Well, some guys came and they threw eggs you know, to our windows and, well, em, it was not a first incident, and 6 months ago they came and they broke the windows and after 15 or 20 days they come just like a wind and they, in one, two minutes, they throw some eggs and then they run away.

In many instances around the country we have been able to establish that vandalism of this kind is solely directed against a mosque and is not aimed at surrounding buildings. In fact, mosque officials are often anxious to establish this fact for themselves. Several community police officers have confirmed the same position. This is not to overlook the fact that random vandalism takes place but rather to acknowledge that Muslims face an additional threat over and above that which is random.

13. Hate crimes against Muslim women

We will be reporting fully on hate crimes against Muslim women in 2011. For now, our preliminary analysis reveals a disturbing number of reported and unreported hate crimes in which Muslim women wearing hijabs, niqabs or burkas have been assaulted, abused and intimidated. These incidents have taken place in public places – streets, shopping centres, on trains and on buses – invariably in view of passers-by and onlookers who have generally not intervened to help or defend the victims.

Attackers are often described as abusing their victims as ‘terrorists’ or being in some way connected to terrorism or connected to ‘the Taliban’. Attackers are generally described as being white males but also often as being of a variety of minority ethnic backgrounds and also sometimes female in a small minority of cases.

Muslim women wearing hijabs, niqabs or burkas face a far greater risk of attack, abuse or hostility than Muslim women who wear Western style dress. As a general rule this risk is lower in multicultural areas where Muslim women feel a sense of safety in numbers and where Muslim public presence is well established. In contrast in many suburban and provincial towns where Muslim populations are small or new the risk of attack and abuse is far higher.

Many attacks take place on buses and trains in full view of public. This is one such example:

...it was Wednesday, on a bus in London, I was finished at Regent's Park doing some reading, got onto the bus, sat down minding my own business, and this woman came on, English lady, I'm presuming English, blonde, about 45 I'd say, I've got a photo. About 45 I reckon, looks quite haggard. She got on ranting, basically, talking about foreigners, saying that England should be all white, too many foreigners in this country, and they smell, and things like that, and carried on, quite grossly, and the bus driver agreed with her. [He] said I agree, I heard him verbally say he agreed with her when she made the statement about too many foreigners in this country, she was talking about how they smell, etc. Not very nice. And as she walked past me, I was sat at the front; I just said can you keep your racism to yourself. Just a simple statement, not aggressive at all, just kind of politely asking, because it was offensive, it offended me, it offended the Afro-Caribbean lady sitting next to me, a girl in hijab a couple of rows behind me, but just bothered me.

The interviewee was made to regret her intervention:

...that was the worst thing to do in that case, because she verbally abused me for about a good five minutes, ranting about everything to do with religion, very rude about Islam, and I said actually I'm English, my Dad's half-English, I was born in London, my Dad's English, and my Mum's Afro-Caribbean, so I'm as British as they come, you know...that obviously bothered me, I was like it's my religion, it's nothing to do with where I'm from, it's my religion. And I kept calm, because I thought

you know, in this day and age if I'd got aggressive or swore, it would have been me that everyone would have looked badly upon, it would have been the Muslim girl shouting at the white lady, not the other way around.

This kind of experience recurs in all parts of the UK we have visited:

I think if it had been – you know, everyone has cameras on their phones, and if I'd sworn or something, it would have been on YouTube, and I just thought no. Kept calm, and this lady just kept going, and I sat down, and then she whacked me on the head, and was like what are those things in your head, about the pins in my scarf. Pins come out, the scarf comes off, so I was obviously quite bothered by that; I've chosen to cover, and it's none of her business. It's not offensive, you see it everyday. You wouldn't expect – what I'm so bothered about is that I'd expect this, it wouldn't, but expect it in a village or a town outside of London, a little countryside place, but it was Baker Street. You see all colours and creeds, religions, you see punks in PVC, like no one bothers anyone, and for me to be attacked for having a scarf. I asked her to not hit me on the head, and she continued, and then she stopped...

In more isolated Muslim communities like Boston in Lincolnshire Muslim women wearing hijab regularly face abuse. According to our interviewee at the Boston mosque a Muslim woman from Latvia “was saying that she walks in the town and sometimes she faces some dirty remarks from, you know, from, from the young guys.”

Similarly, Muslim women wearing hijab and burka report that they often face a greater threat of attack away from City centres and towards the suburbs. One interviewee, a Muslim convert living on the outskirts of Edinburgh explains:

...when you start to go out of the boundaries of the city, there is not a lot of Muslims, and so to see a Sister in Hijab and, initially I only wore a hijab. Now I wear a niqab and I have wore it for about 6 or 9 months, 6 months, nearly 9 months, I have seen a change in people's attitude.

Since wearing a niqab she has learned to be extra vigilant when travelling by bus out of Edinburgh:

...when you are out in these small villages, there is a lot of staring, underlying comments, but sometimes it is the way that you react to it. Like I had a group of boys in Dalkeith – you know, do you know this area? Then of course I answer them ‘so you canna see my face’, and so if I had ignored them or said, ‘Go away’ or been rude, there might not have been that bit of wee interaction. So you have to take each situation on it's personal grounds. That I didna feel threatened by at all. They were in the street, there was a group of ‘em, I was with my sister, and they ended up being like ‘Alright you ...’ and it went really well.

The interviewee demonstrates excellent interpersonal skills and clearly has the ability to disarm potential attackers because she is local and ‘Scottish’. When dealing with drunk attackers, however, interpersonal skills are often less useful:

...again just outside Dalkeith, I didna have Niqab on at the time, there was a young man on his own, very drunk, and this is my area – this is where I was brought up so I know how to deal with drunk people on the bus, but there is a difference when you are wearing a scarf, and I did see him target me as ‘a terrorist’ under his breath, and I thought ‘OK’ and I felt uncomfortable because it was, I was on my own, and he threw his drink and he swore but nothing, there was no attack but I did feel uneasy. So it kind of made me think, not to take the scarf off but to be careful when I am going out late in the evening.

In these kind of situations a Muslim woman is assaulted and told to ‘go home’ even though she has lived in the local neighbourhood all her life:

Yeah! He threw, whatever he had in his bottle he threw it over me and, thank God, the bus just

drew up then and I got on. Erm, the bus ... Something in the bottle, cider or something, and he was mumbling something about 'back to your own country' or something, you know, along these lines, and erm, then he threw this. Now either he was throwing it as I was, knowing the bus was there 'cos he could see the bus coming, but I just was – that was the only one that really unnerved me.

Our interviewee is strong minded and independent and thereby challenges familiar stereotypes of Muslim women wearing niqab as well as being able to challenge and disarm anti-Muslim bigotry in her local neighbourhood:

Just outside Dalkeith, and I was going home, and it was nearly 8 or 9 o'clock at night. But, like I say, I have lived all my life around here, getting the bus alone isn't something that I have a problem with. Very independent woman, so it wasna problem, and I thought, 'I'm not having this. I'm not having other people's ignorance curtail how I behave'. I wasna doing anything wrong. I was just going home, so this was months, and months, and months ago actually to be honest. But I wouldna have made any comment towards that person. I wouldna have tried to interact with them. I wouldna try to make a joke of it or anything 'cos they were drunk. So it is trying to sometimes sort of who is the ones you can have a wee bit of banter with if they are going to make a comment, and who do you just ignore. Erm, and 9 times out of 10, there's never any malice, it's just curiosity. It's just fear. And sometimes ignorance. And, so, erm, on the whole, Edinburgh's pretty safe. You just choose where you go in the area. I don't know if that's... they could, they wouldna go out at all because they don't know where's safer and where's not. There's certain places that, even I wasna wearing, even if I wasna wearing a scarf, I wouldna go to them, just like 'No, no, that's really dodgy'.

Like Muslim women interviewed in other parts of the UK she explains that there are no-go areas after dark:

There's certain places that, after dark, it becomes a no go area, but there's other places where I live, 11 o'clock at night I'm going home on my home for year, from the Mosque, say half past 10, take Isha and we go home on the bus, so it's not a problem. Yeah! I think that does make a huge difference. Erm, sometimes yeah in a positive. Other times, not so positive. There was an incident here just outside the Mosque and a girl had been, the girl had been walking past, and she looked at me and she started me straight in the eyes, and she obviously could tell by the colour in my eyes that I was pale skin and blue eyed, and she shouted at the top of her voice "Oh my God! She's Scottish and she's wearing all that. Oh my God, that's terrible." And I was like 'OK fair enough'. I never commented, I never said anything but I don't know, I don't know why she said that, I don't know but it was the fact that I was white and wearing what I'm wearing. So that is what I'm saying, it can be positive and negative in some, but ... The other things about people shouting or swearing, or sticking their fingers up at you, or erm, the lorry driver who peaked his horn as I tried to cross the road and then as they passed they stuck their fingers up at me, but that could, see I would see that as it could happen to anybody, and maybe they are targeting me because I am dressed differently.

Clearly, this interviewee is willing and able to challenge bigotry:

...since I started wearing Niqab, and I have noticed, well I have also noticed some really positives, because if anyone was wanting to say 'it's all negative, it's all really bad and people are, erm, seeing it as a negative, I have actually had some really interesting, good experiences, but there has been some, like I say – there's a bit of a balance there. I would actually say there has been more positive than negative.

Another Muslim convert has experienced numerous attacks and incidents in Chingford, Essex:

There are many... they range from obviously being called – I don't know, ninja – because I used to wear niqab, by the way, I don't anymore. I used to wear the niqab, and dress much more Muslim

than I do; now I just wear the hijab, and the long gown, the jilbaab as it's called, with just regular clothing on top. Yeah, so...when I was wearing niqab I used to be called ninja, I've been called Paki, even though I'm white with blue eyes, so I'm guessing the whitest Pakistani I've ever seen, but the things that stick out in my mind happened much more recently were when I was living in Chingford, which is in Essex.

Chingford is one of several towns in Essex and outer London suburbs where anti-Muslim hate crimes against women have been prevalent:

Ironically, this town [Chingford] has a substantial population of Muslims, although to be honest they're more cultural than anything else, so they're more Asian-looking and more Indian, rather than Muslim. I have been intimidated – basically there was a teenage boy living on our estate, and where we were living was quite isolated, and I did have a car actually, and I had to scrap it because I believe it was this boy that vandalised my car; my tyres were slashed a couple of times, my wing mirror was knocked off my car, and this all happened in the middle of the night outside my house. This happened between the years of 2007 and 2009, because I eventually moved from there because I couldn't stand it anymore, so in April 2009 I moved from there, so it happened between those dates. And I did actually contact the police, and I did get reference numbers for those things, because obviously it's not very nice when your own property literally outside your house is being vandalised while you're sleeping, the thought doesn't leave you particularly comfortable.

A pattern is beginning to emerge in which Muslim women face greater threats in certain commuter towns. Ashford in Kent is another case in point:

...basically, when I leave my house, anticipate it, I expect it. Sometimes, there are different kind of levels I get, sometimes its little things like people giving me rude looks or they speak to me in a way when they assume I don't speak English or I'm stupid, I don't know Yeah, I wear the headscarf so obviously people can tell that I'm a Muslim. Oh, gosh, I don't even know where to start. So, yeah, basically, I get a lot of comments. Basically people telling me to go back to my country, people swear at me, people call me a foreigner, people won't sit beside me on the bus, I can't even count I've got on to the bus, I've sat down and the bus will fill up, and fill up, and people won't sit beside me. And, then, literally, there have been times when 10 people have got onto the bus and they'd rather stand than sit beside me.

The interviewee has experienced intimidation that falls short of violence but which has caused her acute distress and has had an adverse cumulative impact, an experience that has become commonplace:

...yeah I got on the train and they'd obviously been drinking, actually they were drinking, and as soon as I walked on the train, they actually started singing this really loud song going "There's a Muslim on the train" like really, really loud and of course everybody looked at me really when it happened, it was really embarrassing, really, really embarrassing, like, I hadn't done anything, I'd simply walked on the train, and they started sing a song about me...

Interviews with Muslim women who have moved with their families from Tower Hamlets to Barking reveal a similar level of anti-Muslim hostility and hate crime. In one incident an assailant threw a heavy bottle of water at a woman pushing an infant child in a wheelchair. In the following account an interviewee explains how her mother has been attacked in Barking:

She did [get attacked] when we first moved here. So since then, she doesn't wear her niqab anymore. She doesn't feel safe, or [she] feels that she attracts negative attention. So she had quite a few of these experiences actually. One where I think they did try to take her niqab off. Or they pulled at her scarf; I can't remember which one. I think we advised her not to wear the niqab, because we felt it might invite hostility. When we first moved into this area. I can't remember if she was actually wearing

niqab or she was wearing the scarf...and that would make it worse, if it was just the scarf. She tends to wear the scarf with the niqab over her head.

Elderly Muslim women have often felt inhibited in the face of such incidents:

There was one particular incident which shook her, where they basically tried to pull – either her scarf or niqab, I can't remember – but she was quite shaken by that. She was quite upset and was worried that she wouldn't be able to deal with these people if she goes out again. In case it happens again and so on. I think that was at the beginning of the first year. Then last year, or a few months ago, she had an incident where she was trying to cross the road. She was crossing the road and a car passed by. Somebody from a car passing by threw a bottle at her and she can't remember whether it was plastic or glass. All she could remember was she was so relieved that it went past her and it didn't hit her. But it was clearly aimed at her, according to her memory of it. She was so shaken by that; that really shook her. She talked about that for days; and that day she came, and she was looking really worried and a little bit frightened, actually.

Young Muslim mothers have experienced similar incidents in Barking:

In Barking market... As I was pushing...as I was browsing the stores with my baby in the pram, there was a white tall man who was running past me and swearing: 'Get out of my way! Get that pram out of my way!' In a threatening, hostile manner. That wasn't very pleasant. That was really quite unpleasant.

These are just snapshots of a very serious problem that we will examine in depth in a report in 2011.

14. Muslim victims of street violence

On UK streets violent attacks on Muslims are often demonstrably anti-Muslim in terms of motivation while sometimes racist, sometimes anti-immigrant and occasionally purely random. In consequence many Muslims face a greater cumulative threat of street violence than members of other minority communities and other fellow citizens. Violent street crime and anti-social behaviour is most prevalent in the UK's poorest communities and this also disproportionately impacts on Muslims.

This is to highlight the increased risk of violence and intimidation faced by Muslims in parts of the UK when compared with that faced by fellow citizens and neighbours who face the same threats of random violence, anti-social behaviour and, in many instances, more specific threats as members of minority ethnic and immigrant communities. Muslims are often singled out for attack because their attackers can generally identify their victims as Muslims because of their appearance or because, for instance, they can be targeted when leaving a local mosque.

The reality and significance of this finding is highlighted by cases where multi-ethnic gangs and new immigrants to the UK living in poor neighbourhoods have attacked Muslims because of their perceived relation to terrorism, extremism and subversion.

This is a key point because it is sometimes misleadingly asserted by hate crime specialists that a defining and required feature of an Islamophobic or anti-Muslim hate crime is evidence of hatred of Islam so as to provide necessary evidence of religious hatred. In reality, our evidence suggests, Muslims are attacked on a regular basis because their attackers believe what has become common coinage in the media as well as in the BNP and EDL: that some or all Muslims are terrorists, terrorist sympathisers, extremists or subversives. Even when some aspect of the popular and ill-conceived notion of the 'Islamification of Europe' or the 'Islamification of the UK' plays a motivational part in an attack it implicitly refers to Muslims

in the same pejorative context – as a fifth column, as representing ‘radical Islam’ – rather than as being purely religious and in any way benign and beneficial.

What needs to be understood by policy-makers and police, the evidence suggests, is that an anti-Muslim hate crime is often motivated by a negative view of the kind evinced by the English Defence League (EDL) and the Daily Express in which it is the behaviour of perceived Muslim ‘extremists’ rather than Islam itself that is key and far easier to establish in court.

In interviews in all parts of the UK victims of minor assaults and violent attacks in the street have indicated that they either did not reported the incident to police or did not bother to pursue the matter. Typically an imam in Edinburgh explains how he has passed over minor attacks:

Yes, you can say it is not really like an attack, you know someone going to, to, you know, smashing and like you know, ...it's abusive words someone use, ... [at] the bus stop, I was standing beside my daughter because I picked [her up] from the nursery. I go by bus to at home, and at that time I was living in B...Place, so someone is a heavy, healthy guy about, this is about half 11 time in the morning time, so he was turning also with his family, and he, he started abusing and started, you know like, ‘You Taliban’ and ‘you Mullah Omah’.

Muslims employed as taxi drivers and in restaurants are especially vulnerable to anti-Muslim, racist, anti-immigrant and general drink fuelled random violence late at night in towns and cities across the UK. We will be documenting and analysing their experience in a future report in 2011.

15. Intimidation by the English Defence League

Having emphasised important motivational differences between political activism and political violence (9.6) we turn to the impact of violent demonstrations by the EDL and their sister organisations in the UK. Whereas Hizb ut Tahrir has never aspired or succeeded in organising violent and intimidatory demonstrations in the UK the EDL has repeatedly done so. Our research leaves us in no doubt that the EDL intends to intimidate Muslim communities in the UK. This research finding is vividly illustrated in outstanding investigative journalism conducted by the Guardian.

During the last two years there has been a dramatic rise in anti-Muslim demonstrations in Muslim communities. EDL is the main organising group but other organisers include Stop Islamification of Europe (SIOE), Scottish Defence League (SDL) and Welsh Defence League (WDL). These angry and often violent demonstrations increase fear and anxiety in Muslim communities.

Very often, EDL organisers target mosques and Muslim communities they deem to be ‘radical’ and ‘extremist’. In doing so they base their decisions on the analysis of neo-conservative media pundits and think-tanks where they learn who is a ‘moderate’ Muslim and who is a ‘radical’ and so worthy of targeting for intimidation and protest.

Policy Exchange has been at the forefront of influential campaigns to dissuade police from working in partnership with mosques, Islamic centres and Muslim organisations that they and the EDL assess to be ‘radical’ and ‘extremist’. In consequence, in a number of cases that have been reported to us police have referred instead for advice to the Quilliam Foundation. This is very much in line with Policy Exchange advice. Indeed, such has been the orchestrated campaign to dissuade police from granting legitimacy to Muslim organisations and individuals deemed to be ‘radical’ that several Muslim organisations and individuals have lost the partnership relationships they previously enjoyed with police.

15.1 Intimidation by the EDL in Tower Hamlets

Drawing heavily on Andrew Gilligan's alarmist TV programme (see part 5, sections 30 – 36) EDL members and supporters started to visit Tower Hamlets in the days leading up to a planned demonstration. For Reverend Alan Green who was closely involved in organising opposition to the EDL this was a clear attempt by the EDL to provoke a reaction:

...there were still fears that the EDL were coming and that in particular that they were going to attempt to demonstrate outside the East London Mosque or attack it, and that was fuelled by a visit Tuesday before by a group of fifteen or so EDL who had been in Barking for the day and decided it would be a good wheeze to get off the underground at Whitechapel and have a beer and make themselves known, and that produced a group of 200 young people [Muslim youths] within quarter of an hour. So there were, at the height, I think about 700 young men outside the ELM in the hours following the demonstration the EDL have made two further little sorties since then to the same pub... the Grave Maurice.

Provocative EDL tactics have been seen in other parts of the UK. Green continues:

They picked [this pub] because it's the nearest one to the underground. The police were very frustrated by the third time, because they were becoming the EDL's minders. It's a great wheeze, you turn up here, you push a couple of people about and get in the pub, have a couple of beers, and wait until the police arrive to take you safely back to the tube again... All of those have happened when the EDL has been doing something else...they were in Barking for the two marches that were happening there, they were in Whitehall for the army day.

Fortunately police in Tower Hamlets have built a close working partnership with the East London Mosque, the London Muslim Centre, the Islamic Forum of Europe, the Muslim Council of Britain and other Muslim organisations based locally over a long period of time. As a result police and purportedly 'radical' Muslim organisations worked hand in glove to defeat attempts by the EDL to provoke fear and anger in the run up to a planned demonstration in June 2010. Although the EDL eventually decided to cancel their demonstration they were able to do so in the knowledge that their claim to be opposing 'radical' and 'subversive' Muslims in Tower Hamlets was one that received daily endorsements in the national and local media.

Policy Exchange might not wish to see their analysis of 'radical Islam' being paraded publicly by the EDL but it is difficult to identify any meaningful difference between their views on the topic. Where they differ is in how to respond to the perceived threat. Policy Exchange advocates a counter-subversion strategy against the 'extremists' headed by the Quilliam Foundation and the EDL prefers to organise provocative demonstrations in Muslim neighbourhoods. Both approaches, we submit, are ill conceived and divisive.

During the course of our research in Tower Hamlets throughout the spring and summer of 2010 we observed countless examples of good citizenship from the so-called 'radicals' of the East London Mosque and their associate organisations and groups, not least in the area of youth work that tackles both the causes and incidence of street crime. Their beneficial role has been stoutly proclaimed by their partners in the police, by Neil Jameson, director of London Citizens, by Reverend Alan Green, chair of the Tower Hamlets Interfaith Forum, and many other local partners.

In interview Reverend Green highlights the value of the close partnership he has established with the East London Mosque and London Muslim Centre over a long period, especially with Dilowar Hussain, director of the ELM:

We can work at big problems together, and I recognise you need to stay awake and astute to things, but in the end it is simply those practical moments, and if people are coming and supporting you, then they're people I can work with. And when the bombs went off in London [7/7], I got the bishop down to the ELM so that there could be immediate joint statements, and Dilwar on the Sunday was here in St. John's preaching with me about our opposition to bombers. Now that was entirely unnecessary, that wasn't before TV screens, it wasn't to get anything out of it...

For Green, as for other partners of ELM, LMC and Islamic Forum of Europe (IFE) a negative media campaign by Andrew Gilligan, a Daily Telegraph journalist, made little sense and lacked any real substance:

It was very interesting from the Gilligan programme that most of those Muslims who were critical of IFE [Islamic Forum of Europe] and the LMC were associated with the Bricklane Mosque, and the Brick Lane Mosque has never had any involvement with the [Tower Hamlets] Interfaith Forum at all. Now, that could be because they've decided that we're simply a tool of the IFE and therefore keep clear of us, but...that's certainly not where we started, and that there's been as much opportunity for them to be involved as for the ELM, but they never have done. And simply on the basis of just practicalities, Dilwar [Hussain, ELM/LMC] and the others from the ELM turn up, they will come to things that have nothing to do with pushing themselves forward...and the level then of solidarity that I experience with them does not appear to be about me being used...

Green explains how the EDL campaign against the ELM can be linked to Gilligan's TV programme and media campaign:

...ever since [Gilligan's] programme... the EDL had their eyes on Tower Hamlets and still do, and I think that programme was deeply mischievous, and as always there was some truth knocking around in it, but that was largely about typical Tower Hamlets politics that's just taken on a new colour really...it's the same old politics. Indeed there was one programme to be made about corruption in the Council, there was another to be made about the way that faith works in the borough, and this really just brought the two together in a typical modern journalistic way that does not want to deal with faith in a positive way but see it as a source of a problem, and just by adding faith into the mix, it becomes a bigger problem than it was, and that seemed to be a very good example of that.

Green was at the forefront of partnership work with ELM, IFE, United Against Fascism, LMC and others to tackle the EDL threat:

...it was important that we had a clear public statement of opposition to the EDL, that they might have achieved what they had set out to do in stopping this conference, but they needed to know, and we needed the general population to know, that Tower Hamlets was not going to put up with the sort of tactics that the EDL use.

Refreshingly, Green understands radical Islam in much the same way as radical Christianity:

I understand radical Islam largely as I've understood radical Christianity, that...certainly as a young man I was deeply engaged in politics because of my Christianity and I saw myself as a radical Christian espousing hard left-wing causes as a result of that, and I still remain a socialist, whatever that means these days... And the sense of radical religion is a very positive one for me, and yet it's turned into a wholly negative epithet now, and I have no problem with young people inspired by Islam exploring the radical ends of that in terms of religion, in terms of politics...

Yet seemingly no evidence of partnership work of this kind that the ELM and its associates are noted for locally counts for anything so far as their influential opponents are concerned. Certainly not for Andrew Gilligan and Martin Bright who have been at the forefront of promoting a Policy Exchange inspired counter-subversion strategy in Tower Hamlets both before and during the EDL campaign. For its part, the EDL makes clear that it continues

to monitor activities at and around the East London Mosque very closely and maintains the threat that it will demonstrate against it if further revelations of its 'extremism' are made in the future.

In our research in other towns and cities in the UK where the EDL have held demonstrations there is a similar paucity of evidence to support the notion that the EDL is genuinely campaigning against Muslim extremists who threaten public safety, security and social cohesion. On the contrary, the evidence is overwhelmingly clear that the EDL and its sister organisations are re-cycling neo-conservative propaganda that is detrimental to national safety, security and social cohesion.

16. Victims of 'Paki-bashing' are now victims of 'Muslim-bashing'

Many Asian and other minority ethnic Muslim families suffered racist violence and abuse in the UK in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s and were cautiously optimistic that the problem was beginning to draw to a close at the dawn of the new millennium. After a brief respite that optimism has evaporated. Having endured National Front (NF) inspired racist violence for decades they now face threats from British National Party (BNP) and English Defence League (EDL) inspired anti-Muslim violence.

Several victims of so-called 'Paki-bashing' in the recent past now face the threat of anti-Muslim intimidation and violence, essentially a switch to 'Muslim-bashing'. While for many elderly first generation Muslim immigrants this new wave of violence is being endured with the same stoic and passive endurance offered in response to the earlier manifestation of violence for many of their children and grandchildren resistance and community defence are the watchwords.

Abdullah, typical of many interviewees who have been victims of both racist and anti-Muslim attacks, explains the circumstances of a racist attack in Newham shortly before 9/11:

...I just went to pick up one of my cousins who was playing football, training, for a tournament in Holland. And on the way to pick him up, I think the Oldham Riot had happened, around that time, and I parked my car in an estate in a road of St. Paul's way, and in the estate, there's a block of flats, highly dominated by Caucasian tenants and I didn't really understand the area, parked the car, went to pick him up. He said give me ten minutes, I was walking back to the car, and my brother was called 'an ugly Paki' [by a woman] because he was doing his hair looking in the reflection of a car, and I couldn't understand what triggered that, and I told him to get into the car, and he was a bit upset to the challenge.

Escape proved impossible:

[we] got into the car, apologised, about to pull the car away, two guys, Caucasian, big henchmen, probably qualify for WWF wrestling, if they went for it, came and run out and just kick my car door, throwing punches at the door, and it just went all messy. I was badly injured, seriously assaulted, after the incident I woke up in hospital and I didn't even know what had happened. I was looking for my brother, and basically what happened, whilst the incident happened and the window was open and they throw punches at me and I was wrestling with them inside the car, my brother went outside the car to pull them off me and I remember getting out the car to pull them off but then I was ambushed by a good 17, 18 people, yeah, so somewhere in the brawl some of them allegedly got injured as well but I was certainly woke up in hospital.

On a positive note Abdullah has learned to defend himself against racist violence. His disappointment is that the progress made against racist violence has been undone with the arrival of anti-Muslim attacks since 9/11. His mother has been the victim of this new violence

and he finds that very distressing. Even at the peak of racist violence in Tower Hamlets in the 1980s Muslim women would not have had their hijabs or nicabs pulled off. Now they do.

17. Victims of racism are now victims of anti-Muslim violence

Many black UK citizens suffered racism and racist violence in the second half of the last millennium. While that problem has not ceased, for those victims who have chosen to become Muslims another threat to their safety has arisen: anti-Muslim bigotry and violence. Many Muslim women in black convert communities choose to wear nicab and consequently face a significant risk of violent attack. In several instances attackers come from the same minority ethnic community background as their victims.

18. Serious under-reporting of anti-Muslim hate crimes

Many victims of anti-Muslim hate crime and Muslim victims of crime more generally do not report the incidents to police. Fear, suspicion and alienation are amongst a complex set of reasons for this. Equally disturbing our research reveals instances where mosque managements and community elders are in denial about violence and intimidation – even when we have presented evidence to them of attacks that have been committed against them.

Government has not encouraged police to mount a nationwide campaign to address the problem in the same way it has in respect of underreporting of racist attacks and other hate crimes.

19. Insufficient data to establish scale of anti-Muslim hate crimes

Under-reporting by victims is one factor in a failure to establish the precise scale of the problem. Inadequate police procedures concerning anti-Muslim hate crimes is another important factor. An investigative focus on racist or anti-religious motivation often obscures a more straight forward anti-Muslim motivation.

20. Adverse impact on Muslim communities

Intimidation and violence against Muslims is carried out by a minority of UK citizens to such an extent that it risks undermining and overshadowing the decent and responsible behaviour of the vast majority. While many Muslims live in neighbourhoods where anti-Muslim intimidation and violence is mercifully rare our research indicates that Muslims who live in UK towns where Muslim communities are relatively small and isolated often face significant and sustained campaigns of intimidation and violence.

Muslim victims of hate crimes often feel unsupported in the same way victims of racist attacks have done in the past (and still sometimes in the present). Strong political will of the kind that was evidenced in the aftermath of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry in 1999 that helped improve the reporting, investigation and support for victims of racist violence will be needed to tackle anti-Muslim hate crime. We will report on political developments to tackle anti-Muslim hate crimes in 2011.

178. Githens-Mazer, Jonathan and Robert Lambert, 2010. Islamophobia and Anti-Muslim Hate Crime: a London case study. Exeter: EMRC, University of Exeter.
179. Athwal, Harmit, Jenny Bourne and Rebecca Wood, 2010. op. cit; IRR News Team, 2010. op. cit.
180. The Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006 enacts that 'threatening words and behaviour' may constitute an act 'intended to stir up religious hatred' and hence a criminal offence of 'religious incitement'. Police interviewees have explained how this presents investigative hurdles in respect of anti-Muslim hate crimes that are not present in respect of similar cases where 'stirring up racial hatred' is the point at issue. In other words the burden of proof in an investigation of anti-Muslim hate crime is set higher than in a comparable investigation of racist violence.
181. See for example our case study of a serious anti-Muslim gang attack on Muslim students at City University, London in Githens-Mazer, Jonathan and Robert Lambert, 2010, pp. 26-32.
182. Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia, 1997. ed. Robin Richardson, *Islamophobia: a challenge for us all*. London: Runnymede Trust.
183. See footnote 4.
184. Blair, Tony, 2010. *A Journey*. London: Random House, pp. 341-370.
185. When Blair and Bush left office (in 2007 and 2009 respectively) there was a tendency in Washington and Whitehall to presume that by abandoning the term 'war on terror' it became possible to consign the policy to history without fully appreciating the power and durability of its legacy.
186. For an account of how the term 'Islamist' has been subverted from its original academic use see Pitt, Bob, aka Martin Sullivan, 2009. Brian Whittaker on Islamism. Islamophobia Watch. <http://www.islamophobia-watch.com/islamophobia-watch/2009/4/5/brian-whittaker-on-islamism.html> –accessed 28.8.10.
187. Politically inspired criminal activity that includes terrorism as a sub-category.
188. Schmid, Alex P., 2004. Frameworks for Conceptualising Terrorism. *Terrorism and Political Violence*. 16 (2), pp. 197-221, pp. 205-6.
189. Jackson, Richard, 2005. op. cit.
190. See for example a terrorist bombing on July 27, 1996 in Atlanta, Georgia, United States during the 1996 Summer Olympics, the first of four committed by domestic extremist Eric Robert Rudolph. Two people died, and 111 were injured. Eric Rudolph lays out the anti-capitalist arguments that fueled his two-year bombing campaign, Doug Gross, 1998. Associated Press. 1 April.
191. See for example our concerns at Githens-Mazer, Jonathan and Robert Lambert, 2009. Quilliam on Prevent: the wrong diagnosis. Guardian cif. 19 October. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/belief/2009/oct/19/prevent-quilliam-foundation-extremism> –accessed 17.1.10; Githens-Mazer, Jonathan and Robert Lambert, 2009. Re-shaping Prevent. Guardian cif. 31 October. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/belief/2009/oct/31/counter-terrorism-prevent-muslims> –accessed 17.1.10; Githens-Mazer, Jonathan and Robert Lambert, 2009. Let's be honest about Prevent. Guardian cif. 9 December. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/belief/2009/dec/09/prevent-denham-violent-extremism> –accessed 17.1.10 –accessed 18.10.10.
192. EMRC research notes.
193. See Githens-Mazer, Jonathan and Robert Lambert, 2010. op. cit. pp. 20-26.
194. <http://publicintelligence.net/adam-gadahn-march-7-2010-video-with-transcript/> –accessed 9.9.10.
195. See for example, Lia, Brynjar, 2007. *Architect of Global Jihad: The Life of al-Qaeda Strategist Abu Mus'ab al-Suri* London: Hurst; Cruickshank, Paul and Ali, Mohammad Hage, 2007. *Abu Musab Al Suri: Architect of the New Al Qaeda*. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 30 (1) pp. 1 – 14.
196. <http://publicintelligence.net/adam-gadahn-march-7-2010-video-with-transcript/> –accessed 9.9.10.
197. Former FBI undercover officer Mike German makes an important tactical comparison between extremist nationalist and al-Qaeda terrorism; see German, Mike, 2007. *Thinking Like a Terrorist: Insights of a Former FBI Undercover Agent*. Washington DC: Potomac Books. p.121.
198. <http://publicintelligence.net/adam-gadahn-march-7-2010-video-with-transcript/> –accessed 9.9.10
199. Lehany, David. 2005. *Terrorism, Social Movements, and International Security: How Al Qaeda Affects Southeast Asia*. *Japanese Journal of Political Science* 6 (1), pp. 87-109, p. 88.
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201. Ibid.
202. Tupman, W.A. and O'Reilly, C., 2004. *Terrorism, Hegemony and Legitimacy: Evaluating success and failure in the War on Terror*. Political Studies Association conference, Lincoln, August 2004. p.3. <http://www.psa.ac.uk/cps/2004/tupman.pdf> –accessed 4.4.08.
203. Gerges, Fawaz A., 2005. *The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p.270.
204. Ibid. p.270.
205. Louw, P. Eric, 2003. *The 'War Against Terrorism': A Public Relations Challenge for the Pentagon*. *Gazette: The International Journal for Communication Studies*, 65, pp. 211-230, 211-212; see also Wolfendale, Jessica, 2006. *Terrorism, Security, and the Threat of Counterterrorism*. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*. 29, pp. 753-770.
206. Wolfendale, Jessica, 2006. op. cit.
207. Ibid.
208. See for example, Bloom, Mia, 2005. *Dying to Kill: The Allure of Suicide Terror*. New York: Columbia University Press; Juergensmeyer, Mark, 2006. *Religion and the New Terrorism*. In: Andrew T. H. Tan, ed., *The Politics of Terrorism: a survey*. London: Routledge, pp. 73 – 79; Pedahzur, Ami, 2005. *Suicide Terrorism*. Cambridge: Polity; Atran, Scott, 2003. *Genesis of Suicide Terrorism*. *Science*. 7 Mar., 299 (5612) pp. 1534-1549.
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210. See for example, Mazarr, M.J., 2004. *The Psychological Sources of Islamic Terrorism*. *Policy Review*, 125; Pyszczyński, T., Solomon, S. and Greenberg, J. 2002. *In the Wake of 9/11: The Psychology of Terror*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association; Victoroff, J., 2005. *The Mind of the Terrorist: A Review and Critique of Psychological Approaches*. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*. 49 (1), pp. 3-42.
211. Schbley, Ayla, 2003. *Defining Religious Terrorism: A Causal and Anthological Profile*. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 26, p. 118.
212. Ibid. p. 121.

213. Dr Patrick Sookhdeo, Director of the Institute for the Study of Islam and Christianity; Visiting Fellow at Cranfield University's College of Defence Technology; SOAS PhD.
214. Sookhdeo, Patrick, 2004. *Understanding Islamic Terrorism*. Pewsey: Isaac Publishing. backcover.
215. Ibid. p. 233.
216. Ibid. p. 233.
217. Qur'an – 'The book of Islamic revelation; scripture. The term means 'recitation'. The Qur'an is believed to be the word of God transmitted through the Prophet Muhammad' – Esposito, John L., ed., 2003. *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
218. Hadith – 'Report of the words and deeds of Muhammad and other early Muslims' – Esposito, John L., ed., 2003. op. cit.
219. Shari'ah – 'God's eternal and immutable will for humanity, as expressed in the Qur'an and Muhammad's example (Sunnah), considered binding for all believers' – Esposito, John L., ed., 2003. op. cit.
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“

...whatever its conceptual shortcomings, Islamophobia, is such a well established term that it cannot be wished away. Rather, we simply need to remember that it is a term used positively by those seeking to tackle it and negatively by those who seek to diminish or ridicule it.

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Part Three

Islamophobia and Discrimination

21. Islamophobia and discrimination

In contrast to carrying out a hate crime, discrimination is an activity that even the fainthearted often feel safe to engage in. Not that we intend to suggest that risk taking is the only significant difference between anti-Muslim hate crime and what we will call Islamophobic discrimination. Our point is simply that whereas participation in violent crime entails risk taking of the highest order (i.e. risking one's liberty) participation in discrimination generally poses low or negligible risks of sanction to the perpetrator. For example we have interviewed several Muslims who have suffered demonstrable yet subtle discrimination in the workplace (often when applying for jobs) in situations where the perpetrators have calculated correctly that they could conceal their bias against a Muslim member of staff or job applicant. [This will be the subject of a full report in 2011].

In addition many of the Muslims we have interviewed who have been discriminated against in their neighbourhoods, workplaces or in their engagements with officialdom do not provide compelling evidence about the anti-Muslim nature of the motivation for the discrimination they have experienced. Rather there appear to be a wide range of motivational factors at play. For instance several interviewees have experienced discrimination simply in relation to observing Muslim prayer times in the workplace. In many cases discrimination appears to occur because of a genuine antipathy towards Islam. Thus it seems that Islamophobia retains its value when assessing the credence and significance of these negative experiences of discrimination.

In any event, whatever its conceptual shortcomings, Islamophobia, is such a well established term that it cannot be wished away. Rather, we simply need to remember that it is a term used positively by those seeking to tackle it and negatively by those who seek to diminish or ridicule it.

Our preliminary research data concerning discrimination against Muslims – what is more broadly understood as Islamophobia – tends to underline the findings of well established if widely ignored research in the field. Suffice to say the extent to which high calibre research on the topic has been so consistently ignored is further evidence of the existence of institutional Islamophobia. Institutional Islamophobia has an impact on many Muslims in the workplace, at universities, in schools, in the media, in dealings with police and security services and is well documented by other researchers. We will make own research contribution in 2011 and for now confine our observations to introductory remarks.

21.1 Discrimination in politics

When dealing with discrimination against Muslims government ministers and parliamentarians are faced with a powerful lobby that argues forcefully against victim status for Muslims who face discrimination⁴⁴⁵. While we reject arguments that seek to diminish the

day to day discrimination endured by many Muslims – and we produce compelling evidence to substantiate it – we do concede that remedies will involve a wholesale shift in public education and a long term investment of government and voluntary resources.

Addressing a meeting of parliamentarians, academics and activists in the Palace of Westminster in March 2010 Chris Allen reflected on the opportunities politicians had repeatedly missed to tackle Islamophobia since it was first brought to their attention by the Runnymede Trust in 1997⁴⁴⁶. This meeting had the objective of persuading parliamentarians to launch an All Party Parliamentary Commission (APPG) on Islamophobia⁴⁴⁷. When set against the wide range of worthy causes a plethora of other APPGs investigated the absence of one on Islamophobia in 2010 spoke volumes for Allen's argument.

For those of us present with Allen that evening it was difficult to escape the conclusion that the absence of an APPG was symptomatic of a lack political will to take bold action to confront the problem. This failure of political leadership is all the more striking when set against pioneering parliamentary initiatives that have been launched to tackle discrimination against minority ethnic and other minorities during the same period.

Instead, the recent New Labour government invested significant resources seeking to tackle a perceived link between 'radical' mosques, Islamic institutions and Muslim organisations *and* violent extremism. Perversely, much of this work has sought to minimise the problem of anti-Muslim hate crime or to suggest that it will diminish if Muslims 'get their own house in order'⁴⁴⁸. In consequence, those Muslim organisations that have most assiduously courted government funding in the 'Prevent' arena have often tended to promulgate the same view.⁴⁴⁹

Thus Ed Husain, endorsed by Tony Blair, blames Muslim activists for inventing "Islamophobia" and cultivating a bogus "phenomenon on a par with racism"⁴⁵⁰. Whereas, "outside a few flashpoints where the BNP is at work, most Muslims would" he asserts, "be hard-pressed to identify Islamophobia in their lives". If, however, "there is anti-Muslim sentiment", that he [Husain] has not experienced, then, he argues "we Muslims have to ask what some of us have done to provoke such feelings in a country that is proudly multi-cultural". To answer his own rhetorical question Husain suggests, as Blair does, that "Islamist extremism might be a good starting point" in terms of getting 'the Muslim house' in order⁴⁵¹. More generally Husain illustrates perfectly the Quilliam Foundation's counter-subversion role here – exactly as it was seminally expounded by Charles Moore of Policy Exchange.⁴⁵²

For the government to finance such divisive programmes is a feature of the Prevent programme that reveals inconsistency and hypocrisy. Imagine, for a moment, how inconceivable it would have been post Stephen Lawrence Inquiry for the Blair government to suggest to black and minority ethnic communities that they should 'get their own house in order' as a response to racist violence. Yet prior to Lord Macpherson's landmark finding of institutional racism in the police it was not unknown for senior politicians and senior police officers to co-opt black and minority ethnic community leaders to give testimony against those activists in their own community who campaigned against police racism in exactly the same way the Quilliam Foundation does now.

It took strong leadership from Home Secretary Jack Straw and police chief John Grieve to persuade colleagues that they should embrace and embed Macpherson's ruling in police culture. In consequence, Grieve built trust and partnership with his sternest community critics⁴⁵³. Such, however, has been the pervasive impact of the war on terror that attempts to transfer Grieve's doctrine to engagement with critical Muslim voices have been successfully opposed and obstructed⁴⁵⁴. Instead, from the guide books to colonial counter-insurgency and

Cold War counter-subversion that Macpherson might have supposed obsolete, government and police chiefs have created and promoted the work of the Quilliam Foundation. We therefore refer to the government's support for the Quilliam Foundation as discrimination because it treats Muslims unfairly and in a way that would not be countenanced in respect of other minority communities in the UK.

Discrimination in respect of anti-terror legislation and related policy that unfairly targets and impacts on Muslim communities is brought into sharp relief in interviews with victims and Muslim community case workers. To that extent our research supports much of the evidence in numerous Open Society Institute reports published on the topic in recent years.⁴⁵⁶

Our research has been conducted against the background of a steadily mounting death toll of British troops in Afghanistan. Several Muslim interviewees have tried to explain how this impacts on anti-Muslim sentiment and hate crime. This is one example, an observation from a mosque official in Bishops Stortford:

...because the way things are at the moment in the world...there is war...and so many different things going on...when they hear on the radio; when they see a soldier has been killed and his body has been brought back. Then some people, when they have a few drinks, it goes through their mind. And they say: 'Oh, these people...' They don't know the inside story or what's happening. They think: 'We are fighting against the Muslims and the Muslims are killing us.' Which is not the case. But this is what the people who have got no knowledge...they don't know the background...they just know that this guy was English or he was from so-and-so area and his body is coming back and he was killed in Iran or Afghanistan or Iraq. And they think he's been killed by the Muslims. But Muslims are not killing them. It's a war and in war it's a different situation. No Muslim has ever killed anybody in this country, just on the basis of the other person is not a Muslim. Crime is a different story. But hatred against non-Muslims...I mean, it never happens in my lifetime being here. Nobody killed somebody for not being a Muslim.⁴⁵⁷

21.2 Discrimination against Muslim organisations

Where our research explores relatively untrammelled ground is in respect of political discrimination against Muslim organisations. As we have noted, both the previous government and the new coalition government are influenced by advice it receives from influential neo-conservative think tanks such as Policy Exchange and the Centre for Social Cohesion. To illustrate, Policy Exchange has long argued that government and police should deny legitimacy and influence to any Muslim organisation in the UK that seeks to retain Islam as its prime point of reference for political decision making.⁴⁵⁸

Given the strong links between Policy Exchange and members of the Cabinet it is unsurprising that this analysis should have gained traction in Whitehall. Cabinet member and former Policy Exchange chairman Michael Gove first wrote at length on the topic in his book, *Celsius 7/7*⁴⁵⁹. Here, when Muslims engage in democratic politics in the UK to protest the war in Iraq they are condemned as a "Trojan horse", followers of Islamism 'a political creed that perverts Islam' that according to Gove, "appeals to that part of the human soul that has always been capable of being drawn to revolution, violence and the exaltation of the self through membership of the elect"⁴⁶⁰. This is also the basis on which Gove upbraids "too many in the legal establishment" who, he argues, fail "to put the defence of our civilisation ahead of the defence of the traditions with which their profession has grown comfortable"⁴⁶¹.

Evidence in our report illustrates the conceptual paucity of the Policy Exchange perspective but for now we will illustrate the adverse impact it would have on the coalition government's

commitment to social fairness. Throughout the UK some of the most effective voluntary work tackling urgent social problems such as gun crime, knife crime, drug related crime, anti-social behaviour and violent extremism is being undertaken by Muslim organisations and Muslim youth workers because of their strong commitment to the notion of responsible citizenship provided to them by their religion.⁴⁶²

As exemplary pro-active citizens Muslims in this category are no different to members of some other faith communities in the UK. For instance it is germane to compare the work of successful Islamically inspired youth outreach projects in deprived, crime ridden urban environments with neighbouring ones inspired by an evangelical rendition of Christianity. In neither case does strict religious adherence impair any aspect of active and responsible citizenship. On the contrary, as a general rule, both Islam and Christianity inspire successful voluntary work of a calibre that is hard to find elsewhere, especially in such dangerous and demanding environments.

It is therefore unfair and unjust to stigmatise a Muslim project of this kind as subversive, divisive and sectarian while exempting the Christian group from the same test. For example, leaders of successful youth outreach projects that are inspired by Islam or Christianity both follow religious teachings that condemn homosexuality and yet demonstrate an ability to treat their local gay communities with dignity and respect. Indeed, the ability to demonstrate respect to communities with which one fundamentally differs on major issues might be said to a hallmark of a fair, just and tolerant society.

In the event, however, Policy Exchange, the Quilliam Foundation and their less temperate acolytes, insist that the coalition government should delegitimize Muslim organisations – however successful they might be – on the erroneous premise that their allegiance to Islamically inspired civic engagement is subversive and detrimental to social cohesion⁴⁶³. We produce evidence to challenge that assertion while also highlighting the double standard that ensues when governments fail to apply the same standard to groups and projects inspired by evangelical Christianity.

At the time of writing it is by no means certain that the coalition government will follow the Policy Exchange route. Muslim organisations take heart from the fact that deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg stood up firmly against Policy Exchange on this topic when in opposition⁴⁶⁴. Ironically, Godson and Moore, the architects of Policy Exchange policy that stigmatises Muslim organisations, could be more certain of success in influencing Blair and Brown governments than Cameron's on the issue that means the most to them.

Stigmatisation, as we conceive it, is an acute form of discrimination. Discrimination often impacts adversely on individuals and vulnerable sections of the community by depriving them of services and rights to which they might otherwise be entitled. Stigmatisation, in the present case, involves concerted action to demonise Muslim organisations and individuals as threats to security and social cohesion in the UK and to remove any vestige of legitimacy and authority they might enjoy.

It is no coincidence that Muslim organisations at the forefront of identifying and tackling Islamophobia have been the subject of ongoing and intensifying vilification from influential politicians, think-tanks and media commentators since 9/11. Just as the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR),⁴⁶⁵ the most effective campaigning organisation against rising Islamophobia in the US, is systematically vilified as an extremist and subversive organisation by powerful US politicians and think-tanks including the Middle East Forum so too are its UK counterparts subjected to malicious smears from UK allies of Middle East Forum⁴⁶⁶. Equally,

it is no co-incidence that the nature of the smears is the same on both sides of the Atlantic. In principle if not in specific detail, the lengthy rebuttal CAIR has written and published on its website might serve any of its UK counterparts equally well.⁴⁶⁷

Some Conservative members of the new coalition government enjoy close relations with Policy Exchange and many other bodies in a coalition of influential think-tanks and media commentators who regularly denigrate the most effective Muslim organisations in tackling anti-Muslim hate crimes, supporting its victims and combating its causes. Since coming to power in May 2010 the government has come under sustained pressure to delegitimize the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB), the Muslim Safety Forum and many other voluntary Muslim organisations that have been at the forefront of dedicated and effective work to tackle Islamophobia anti anti-Muslim hate crime during the last decade.

The ostensible basis for denying the MCB (and other mainstream Muslim organisations) legitimacy and authority is an alleged attachment to ‘extremism’, ‘radicalism’ and ‘fundamentalism’ that really reveals far more about their detractors than any activity the MCB and other targeted organisations are actually involved in⁴⁶⁸. Cumulatively, the allegations are supposed to prove the disloyalty and disability of the MCB and other organisations to work effectively against violent extremism and to work respectfully with members of the gay and other non-Islamic communities in the UK. Our research provides evidence to disprove the allegations.

In truth most politicians and political commentators are aware that if ever a just and lasting settlement of the Israel / Palestine dispute was established then many of the complaints about the MCB (and all other Muslim organisations in the UK that demonstrate strong support for the Palestinian cause) would diminish at a stroke. It is axiomatic that neo-conservative campaigns to stigmatise so-called ‘Islamist’ organisations in the UK are explicitly and concurrently strong supporters of a hard-line defence of Israel’s oppressive treatment of the Palestinians.

In response the previous New Labour government began to distance itself from established partnerships with the MCB and others and instead cultivated new relationships with invented ‘counter-subversion’ organisations such as the Sufi Muslim Council⁴⁶⁹. When this particular organisation disappeared into the vacuum from whence it came its creator Haras Rafiq was nevertheless encouraged and funded by government to set up CENTRI, ‘an organization focused on countering extremism at the operational level’⁴⁷⁰.

To illustrate, appointed a “cultural ambassador” for the UK government’s Projecting British Islam initiative, Rafiq addressed the Middle East Forum⁴⁷¹ on the topical subject of ‘radicalisation’⁴⁷². Unlike the MCB, Rafiq has an account of radicalisation that is fully in tune with Tony Blair’s and the government he used to lead⁴⁷³. Rafiq told his US audience that when his six-year old daughter announced that she no longer wanted to be Muslim because “Muslims are always angry” he attributed her sudden declaration to having seen images of Muslims burning effigies of Tony Blair and George Bush.⁴⁷⁴

In consequence, Rafiq told a receptive audience, that he “decided to devote himself to counter-extremism”⁴⁷⁵. This negligent conflation of popular opposition to US and UK foreign policy with violent extremism (or terrorism) runs all the way from Rafiq’s ‘counter-extremist’ work to the propaganda of the British National Party (BNP) and the English Defence League (EDL). In providing this link, not only does Rafiq create a false premise on which to build a basis for stigmatising and endangering mainstream Muslim organisations like the MCB he also provides tools for dismissing any attempts they might make to defend themselves.

Especially useful here is Rafiq's account of "taqiyya, or doctrinal deceit, which permits Islamists to dissemble their true beliefs"⁴⁷⁶.

In fact, this is an interpretive tool that Rafiq's hosts at Middle East Forum are very familiar with having used it consistently against Professor Tariq Ramadan for over a decade⁴⁷⁷. Indeed, the Ramadan case is crucially important because it highlights the 'catch 22'⁴⁷⁸ Muslims face when seeking to demonstrate their loyalty to their homes in the US or the UK. Thus, if they say something disloyal they speak the truth and if they something loyal they dissemble. Fortunately, our full report contains an excellent account of Ramadan's canon of work by Myriam Francois-Cerrah that cuts through this pejorative and disreputable analysis (part 1, section 7).

21.3 Discrimination against mosques and Islamic centres

As noted above (part 2, section 12) mosques and Islamic centres across the UK have suffered an alarming level of criminal attacks since 9/11. Incidents include fire bombings, serious assaults on staff, criminal damage, vandalism, intimidation, insults and threatening and abusive communications. By a small margin the majority of cases we have examined reveal victims' satisfaction with police responses to these kind of incidents. Satisfaction with police responses is often especially high in respect of reassurance patrols in the vicinity of the mosque or Islamic centre in question, less so in terms of the investigation of offences and the apprehension of offenders. However, we have found little evidence to suggest that police actively discriminate against mosques and Islamic centres in any way. That said, in a small number of cases victims' have expressed disappointment with the conduct of individual officers suggesting that improved community awareness training for police would be beneficial.

The one area where we have found clear evidence of institutional discrimination against mosques and Islamic centres is in local government and in local politics generally. This is not to overlook examples of good practice in local government and local politics that have been recorded as well. Rather our purpose is to highlight significant shortcomings in the service provided to mosques and Islamic centres by some local councils. For this reason Chris Allen's West Midlands case study is illuminating when dealing with the local politics surrounding the proposed building of a new mosque and Islamic centre in Dudley. We will be reporting on this issue in 2011.

21.4 Discrimination by police

Most of the data we have so far collected on the topic of discrimination by police centres around stop and search and other interactions Muslim interviewees have had with police on the streets. Numerous Muslims who were teenagers in the 1980s and 1990s experienced aspects of police racism and so they are compelling witnesses when they speak about a significant and discernibly negative change in their interaction with some police officers after 21/7. Abdullah⁴⁷⁹ illustrates some widespread concerns:

I wear, sometimes, my religious attire, like Fridays, Ramadan, and every now and then when I feel like it, you know when I want to relax or calm down, I sometimes where my spiritual attires, and you walk around the streets you get looks, and it's not a problem, but what is a problem is when Metropolitan Police stop you. That was another incident on that day when I got stopped twice under two different parts, under the terrorism act, and the second time I got stopped I had to pull out the search thing, look I got stopped not long ago, why are stopping me again?⁴⁸⁰

Discussion, in this instance, revolved around use of special counter terrorism powers:

This was, funnily enough, in Newham, town hall, [...] the high street north side [...] near there and I sort of questioned the officers, what's the problem this is the second time, and he said we're just doing our job, apparently there was some football or something down West Ham and, [...] this football, why am I being searched under the terrorism act? I think the terrorism act gives them more powers, that's probably what it was, and thought that was a bit abuse; there's football round the corner, and you searching us, under the terrorism act, and you stopped me twice and I heard going past that somebody else was moaning that they've got stopped as well, that day, another Muslim.⁴⁸¹

In so many cases like this the issue of Islamic dress and appearance becomes a contentious issue:

I had the long attire and I was just wondering, terrorism act, my religious attire – there was another incident shortly after, a few months later, people getting stopped, but I deliberately made it my interests to see what happens⁴⁸²

Abdullah continues:

...and I saw, you know, the high proportion that they were stopping were brothers with beards, people wearing religious attires, Islamic attires, and two young Asian kids they stopped, they were Asian they didn't look, could be Sikh, could be Hindu, could be Muslim, so you saw that the high proportion of people being stopped were Asian or people who looked Muslim. There were two Afro-Caribbean, males, who were stopped as well, while I was there, but then they had beards as well, but whether they were classed as Muslims as well or just whatever backgrounds and I was just looking at, trying to work out what was going on here⁴⁸³

Abdullah reflects and tries to understand the reason for this police behaviour:

With police, or I don't I know if it's more the police or it's just the policies around the police, the policies which governs the police, has it got something to do with that? Or is it the police, can they not stand Asians or Muslims? That's the question that I'm still asking myself. In the early day my understanding was they stopped people under the hooliganism act or something, but now I've noticed they're using the terrorism act quite a bit. I know of people who are getting arrested, mainly Asian, highly Muslims, but Asians, BME, people I've worked with, relatives, I'm being picked up with the terrorism act or later on getting picked up with driving without insurance or the warrant out for a speeding act, getting arrested for the terrorism act but later on getting charged for something else. So you're seeing all this stuff and you're wondering what on earth is going on? Where do we live, what is happening here?⁴⁸⁴

It is reassuring to note that when he was assaulted at railway station Abdullah received excellent support from police. This also resonates with our research around the UK where police support for victims of crime is often very highly valued. Concerns invariably arise in a counter-terrorism context. We aim to share this rich learning experience with Abdullah and fellow interviewees in the months ahead and to report our preliminary findings in 2011.

Some of the data we have collected that involves discrimination by council and police is connected to the Prevent programme and that will also be presented in a report in 2011. Although it is well documented in the media we have original material on a CCTV controversy in Sparkhill, Birmingham that illustrates the extent to which actions against Muslim communities have taken place which would not be countenanced by police, local or central government in respect of any other section of the community ⁴⁸⁵. Human rights lawyers point to illegality and discrimination; we add that discrimination against a 'suspect community' is invariably counter-productive and self defeating as a counter-terrorism measure.

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- 466 See <http://www.meforum.org/> –accessed 1.10.10.
- 467 See http://www.cair.com/Portals/0/pdf/Dispelling_Rumors_about_CAIR.pdf –accessed 1.10.10.
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NORTH EAST
ENGLAND
INFIDELS



“

It is worth stressing this as a timely reminder of the length of time Muslim communities have been resident and contributing to the region as much as reminding ourselves that Muslims and Islam are very much a part of the fabric of the West Midlands.

”

Part Four

West Midlands Case Study

– *Chris Allen*

22. West Midlands

The Midlands is often divided into the West Midlands region and East Midlands region with Birmingham regarded as the major city of the former and Leicester in respect of the latter. The West Midlands is an official region of England, covering the western half of the area traditionally known as the Midlands. In addition, a much smaller area became the West Midlands county in 1974 and includes Birmingham and the larger West Midlands conurbation, which includes the city of Wolverhampton and large towns of Dudley, Solihull, Walsall and West Bromwich. The city of Coventry is also located within the West Midlands county, but is separated from the conurbation to the west by several miles of green belt.

The West Midlands is a geographically diverse region. Made up of six counties – Herefordshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, West Midlands and Worcestershire – the region is home to both densely populated urban and sparsely populated rural areas. Within its central conurbation, the region is home to Britain's second most populous city, Birmingham. Other notable cities and towns in the region include Coventry, Solihull and Stoke-on-Trent as well as the area covered by towns such as Dudley, Walsall, West Bromwich and Wolverhampton, parts of which are locally known as the Black Country. In total, the region accounts for around 11% of England's overall population although numbers are concentrated in the urban areas.

According to mid-2008 estimates from the Office of National Statistics (ONS), the population of the West Midlands region was 5,411,100 of which just under half live in the West Midlands county: just over a million of which live in Birmingham. Beyond that, around 20% live in Staffordshire, 10 % in Worcestershire, 10% in Warwickshire, 9% in Shropshire, and 3% in Herefordshire.

In terms of the region's Muslim population, the 2001 Census stated that the West Midlands region was home to 216,184 Muslims, around 4% of the population. Being slightly higher than the national average for England and Wales (3%), the percentage population is dramatically higher in Birmingham where Muslims make up almost 17% of the city's inhabitants. (add a word about likely figures now and growth – 'The Muslim population in Britain has grown by more than 500,000 to 2.4 million in just four years, according to official research collated for The Times'.⁴⁸⁶

Other locations where the Muslim population is higher than the national average include Walsall (5%), Sandwell (4.5%), East Staffordshire (4%) and Coventry (4%). Muslim communities across the region are probably the most diverse in England outside of the capital with many having been resident in the urban areas of the West Midlands in significant numbers since the first waves of mass migration following the end of the Second World War. This is particularly true of Birmingham. Although primarily from the Indian subcontinent – in particular the Mirpur region of Pakistan – Muslim communities with heritages from the

Middle East, North and Sub-Saharan Africa, and Eastern Europe also have a marked presence in Birmingham and the West Midlands more widely.

In addition, the region is home to a growing number of white British and Black-Caribbean converts. As a result of ongoing immigration, Muslim settlers from countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq and Somalia have also begun to establish communities in recent years. One key issue facing Muslim communities in the region however is that many live in areas of high deprivation where poverty levels are extremely high as indeed is population density. The impact of these disproportionately high levels of inequality – as indeed those experienced by others in similar conditions – cannot be underestimated or overlooked.

In terms of community infrastructure, the first mosque to be established in the region was in Birmingham in the 1960s. This took the form of a ‘house mosque’ followed soon after by the development of the first purpose-built facility – the Birmingham Central Mosque in the Highgate district of the city – which opened its doors in 1975. At the time it was the largest mosque in Europe. Today, around 200 mosques can be found across Birmingham that range from grand purpose-built facilities through converted warehouses, churches and the like to smaller facilities above shops and rooms in residential buildings. As well as Birmingham, Muslim communities, mosques and other associated facilities and buildings can be seen pretty much across the whole of the West Midlands. It is worth stressing this as a timely reminder of the length of time Muslim communities have been resident and contributing to the region as much as reminding ourselves that Muslims and Islam are very much a part of the fabric of the West Midlands.

The West Midlands region has many similarities with London. Some of these include the fact that significant Muslim communities have been settled here for more than half a century, Muslims make up a significant percentage of the population in certain areas, Muslim populations live in areas of high deprivation, numerous and indeed many different types of mosques punctuate the landscape, and Muslims across the region are a recognisable entity. In terms of Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hate crimes, there too would appear to be some significant overlap between the West Midlands and the capital.

As the sister report to this study that considered Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hate crime in London published in January 2010 highlighted, there would definitely appear to be some tangible links between Islamophobia or anti-Muslim bigotry and the mainstream political climate, media discourse and the extremist nationalist discourse. In the region, the latter especially would appear to have some significant resonance with the way in which Muslims and Islam are perceived. Likewise too with the sister report, there would also appear to be much in the West Midlands that would support the finding that assailants of Muslims are largely motivated by the widespread negative views of Muslims and that they are a major motivating factor for perpetrating acts of violence, assault and attack.

Maintaining the similarities with the London report, it would also be fair to suggest that in the West Midlands, Muslims face the threat of violence and intimidation from a number of different arenas. First in terms of what the London report termed a small violent extremist nationalist milieu. Second, ordinary people convinced and angered by negative portrayals of Muslims that amongst other things suggest they are terrorists and security threats. Unlike the capital though, there is no evidence available in the West Midlands to suggest that Muslims are at risk of violence or attack from gangs with no allegiance or affinity to the violent extremist nationalist milieu. On this point, the region may be different from the capital. That said, our research in both regions is at an early exploratory stage.

Important features have emerged in the way in which Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hate crimes become manifested. First, there has been a significant incidence of attacks on material entities. For example, there have been numerous attacks on mosques across the region in recent years. Second, there has been a significant use of the internet, not least social networking sites, to disseminate and spread Islamophobic and other negative views of Muslims and Islam in the region. And finally, whilst it would seem that the view that Islamophobic incidents and anti-Muslim hate crimes were underpinned by the negative view that Muslims pose a security or terrorist threat, in the West Midlands it would also seem that there has been much made of the view that Muslims – and indeed Islam – pose a threat to local identities, cultures, values, way of life and so on, a point particularly evident in the Black Country.

Setting out some context from the West Midlands, this exploration will begin by considering the role and activities of the violent extremist nationalist milieu paying particular attention to groups and organisations that have been active in the region, notably the British National Party (BNP) and the English Defence League (EDL). Second, it will consider incidents and events that might be rightly appropriated to ordinary people from the region who have become convinced and angry about Muslims and Islam – possibly because of their negative portrayal as terrorists and security threats – and have felt the need to respond accordingly with violent or other retaliatory actions. This chapter does not include in this any visitors to the region as the London report does on the basis that no clear evidence exists to suggest that this is an issue in the West Midlands. And finally, some overriding observations will be set out.

The evidence for these observations, and indeed the findings that follow, are borne out of a systematic review and analysis of traditional news reporting sources at both national – e.g. The Guardian – and local level – e.g. Stourbridge, Halesowen and Dudley News group of newspapers – as well as online news resources and portals – e.g. BBC News – including those that are West Midlands specific – e.g. This is Staffordshire. Additional online searches were also performed that looked at social networking sites where overt anti-Muslim and Islamophobic groups and pages were not only established but were active at either the regional level or on regional issues– e.g. Facebook. In key incidents or settings, these processes of review and analysis have been supported by compelling and original primary data, gained primarily from interviews with victims and witnesses of Islamophobia across the region as well as those placed more strategically in understanding and appreciating what is happening in locales and areas.

Where possible, interviews were recorded or extensive notes were made throughout. Sometimes due to the prevailing environment or the fact that interviewees felt under pressure because of the sometimes serious and sensitive issues being discussed, this was not possible. In these circumstances, notes were written up within twenty-four hours before being checked and discussed with participants. To ensure the robustness of the evidence being put forward, this two-pronged approach has also been triangulated – where possible – with other sources of evidence, for example using academic studies or policy documents.

23. Muslims, Islam and the West Midlands in context

Since 2001, a number of international, national and local events have caused Muslims and Muslim communities in the West Midlands to come under greater scrutiny and question. It is not necessarily the case that any or indeed all of these incidents and events have been either Islamophobic or anti-Muslim, or indeed that they have been any different to similar activities

that have been occurring elsewhere in other parts of the country or within other communities, although it is possible that at least some of these have influenced or at least contributed to the negative perceptions that have become prevalent and widespread about Muslims and Islam in the region. Whilst this report does not allow space for all such incidents and events to be considered in full, it is useful to set out some of those incidents that have had the potential for either damaging relations or negatively influencing perceptions. Consequently, this context is far from exhaustive. Instead, it is an indicator of some of the circumstances and settings that may have had resonance.

As well as a generally acknowledged backlash against Muslims communities in the wake of the 9/11 attacks in New York,⁴⁸⁷ apprehension and suspicion became commonplace in the way in which Muslims and Muslim communities were perceived both in the West Midlands and indeed across the entire UK. In the Black Country in particular, this was exacerbated by news that the so-called 'Tipton Taliban' – as they were colloquially known – were being held in extrajudicial detention by the US Government in Guantanamo Bay. Eventually repatriated and released without charge in 2004, the Daily Telegraph reported on the divisive impact this had on the local community,⁴⁸⁸ something that will be considered in more detail in the next section. Nonetheless, its legacy has cast a long shadow.

In Birmingham however, the situation has been quite different and the real impact has been since the events of 7/7 and the wider recognition of the threat – both perceived and real – from 'home-grown' terrorism. Being home to a number of terror raids since, concerns and suspicions about Muslims and Muslim communities across the city have been heightened and it is the view of some that 'extremists' are active there. The first incident to heighten tensions was in relation to arrests made shortly after the failed terror attacks of 21 July 2005 when four men were arrested at two addresses in the city: the first in Hay Mills, the second in Washwood Heath. As West Midlands Police confirmed in the Independent newspaper, "One man was arrested under the Terrorism Act 2000. The man was Tasered during the operation. No firearms were discharged...A suspect package was found and, as a precautionary measure, evacuations have been undertaken in the vicinity and bomb disposal experts are in attendance".⁴⁸⁹

Further terror raids took place on 1 February 2007 in connection with a plot to kidnap and behead a Muslim member of the British armed forces. Undertaking dawn raids on 12 addresses in the Sparkhill, Washwood Heath, Kingstanding and Edgbaston areas were raided at around 4:00am when nine people were arrested. In addition, a Muslim owned general store and an Islamic bookshop were raided. Given that all of those arrested were Muslim, West Midlands Police were widely reported as being keen to ensure that Muslim communities across the city were aware of what was happening and indeed why. As BBC News reported, the Police set up community advice lines in a range of languages at the same time as distributing around 5,000 leaflets to local people.

In response, one Muslim community leader, Shabir Hussein, said that whilst "The community is under stress..." he told Muslim families, "...they do not know where their children are, they do not know what they do. At the mosque we are saying 'open your eyes, look underneath your feet'"⁴⁹⁰. But echoing the concerns of many in the city's Muslim communities, another community leader Ayub Pervaz added, "If people have broken the law they should be brought to justice...[we] appeal for no trial by media. If any of those arrested turn out to be innocent, this should be made clear". Then in 2008, further raids saw the arrest and sentencing of a man in the Small Heath area of the city in July for attempting to

make bombs in his flat and then in October of that same year, five other men were arrested in raids on five separate addresses in Sparkbrook, Hodge Hill, Ward End, Bordesley Green and Aston⁴⁹¹. Similar raids also took place in Stoke in 2008⁴⁹².

Five of the 12 arrested in relation to the beheading plot were later charged, tried, convicted and sentenced for terrorism offences. However, some of the raids and arrests have not always been so successful, or maybe some have not been well communicated in terms of what the outcomes have been. Because of this, some have questioned whether the raids were always proportionate and whether they were always necessary. This is not to suggest that a different counter-terrorism or policing approach need necessarily be undertaken. Such decisions have to be decided and responded to on the intelligence that is available at the time. Nor is it to suggest that such raids and arrests are by consequence Islamophobic or anti-Muslim. Indeed, quite the opposite. But given that the raids and subsequent arrests are widely reported in the media and without doubt have an impact on both community relations and the way that Muslims and Islam are perceived maybe it would be useful for the outcomes of these to be better communicated to a wider audience. If not, then the perception of those individuals who are released without charge remains such that they continue to be seen to be guilty and involved in extremist activities even though no evidence exists to suggest whether they were or not.

Research has shown that not only does this type of perception have the potential to further isolate and alienate Muslim communities⁴⁹³ but so too does it reinforce preconceived fears and anxieties about Muslim cultures and traditions⁴⁹⁴. Finding a way of addressing this then would be both worthwhile and extremely impacting.

It is for this reason that those such as Ayub Pervaz note how the media have an enormous influence on shaping attitudes and ideas in society. This can be highlighted by the Channel 4 Dispatches programme, *Undercover Mosque*, the impact of which might have some resonance with the fact that mosques have become a regular target for Islamophobic attack across the region in recent years. First broadcast on 15 January 2007, the programme featured secretly filmed footage from within British mosques collected over the period of a calendar year. Including two of Birmingham's mosques – Green Lane Mosque and the UKIM Islamic Centre in Sparkbrook – the footage showed a handful of British Imams making allegedly derogatory claims about such things as homosexuality, women and integration into British society. Following the programme being aired, West Midlands Police launched an investigation into whether any criminal offences had been committed by those featured in the programme. To carry out the investigation, West Midlands Police requested access to material that was not broadcast, eventually obtaining a production order for the unseen footage. On presentation of the findings to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), it was concluded that “a realistic prospect of a conviction was unlikely”⁴⁹⁵.

However, whilst the investigation initially looked at whether there had been any criminal offences committed by those featured in the programme, the CPS and West Midlands Police agreed that the editing and portrayal of the programme presented a damaging and distorting impression of the speakers involved. CPS reviewing lawyer Bethan David was so convinced that the editing completely distorted what the speakers were saying, the Police asked the CPS to consider “...whether a prosecution under the Public Order Act 1986 should be brought against Channel 4 for broadcasting a programme including material likely to stir up racial hatred”⁴⁹⁶. Concluding that there was insufficient evidence to prove that racial hatred had been stirred up as a direct consequence of the programme, West Midlands Police referred the

matter to the broadcasting regulators Ofcom by making a formal complaint. The complaint was eventually rejected by Ofcom on 19 November 2007 who concluded that “Undercover Mosque was a legitimate investigation, uncovering matters of important public interest... On the evidence (including untransmitted footage and scripts), Ofcom found that the broadcaster had accurately represented the material it had gathered and dealt with the subject matter responsibly and in context”⁴⁹⁷. Legal action was duly taken by Channel 4 resulting in West Midlands Police and the CPS having to apologise to the makers of the documentary for accusing them of distortion and agreeing to pay them £100,000 in compensation. After the High Court hearing, West Midlands Police informed the media that there had been no evidence that Channel 4 or the documentary makers had “misled the audience or that the programme was likely to encourage or incite criminal activity”⁴⁹⁸.

Whilst research has yet to specifically consider the impact of the programme, the ensuing investigation or subsequent prosecution, not least the last statement by West Midlands Police that there had been no evidence that Channel 4 or the documentary makers had ‘misled the audience’, it is possible that any impact might have some resonance with the way in which mosques have become targets for Islamophobic attack in the West Midlands. This is of course a presumptive suggestion and one that lacks the necessary empirical evidence to substantiate it but as a report for the Greater London Authority noted, where representations of Muslims and Islam in the British media commonly feature facts that are distorted, exaggerated or oversimplified the consequence is such that it is likely to provoke and increase feelings of insecurity, suspicion and anxiety amongst non-Muslims at the same time as provoking feelings of insecurity, vulnerability and alienation amongst Muslims. The report added, such coverage is unlikely to help diminish levels of hate crime and acts of unlawful discrimination by non-Muslims against Muslims⁴⁹⁹. In support of this, as the corresponding research into Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hate crime in London showed, ‘prima facie and empirical evidence’ was uncovered to demonstrate that “assailants of Muslims are invariably motivated by a negative view of Muslims they have acquired from either mainstream or extremist nationalist reports or commentaries in the media”⁵⁰⁰. This is clearly something that cannot be overlooked in the context of the West Midlands.

24. Violent extremist nationalist milieu

Far-right groups and organisation that fit within the broad church that is the ‘violent extremist nationalist milieu’ have, to varying degrees, been active and influential in the West Midlands region for some years. Whilst not necessarily flag bearers of the far-right in their time, the region has seen its fair share of controversy in recent history: take for example the Conservative Party’s 1964 political campaign that stated ‘If you want a nigger for a neighbour, vote Labour’ in Smethwick or Enoch Powell’s infamous 1968 ‘Rivers of Blood’ speech which was delivered in Wolverhampton. The region has also been one where people have mobilised themselves to oppose such messages, not least in the immediate aftermath of Eric Clapton’s drunken rant at the Birmingham Odeon in 1976 about supporting the National Front and keeping ‘Britain white’. Outraged by his comments, Clapton’s outburst became the impetus to set up the anti-fascism campaign group, Rock Against Racism⁵⁰¹.

Much though has changed since the 1960s and 1970s and this includes the way in which those from within the violent extremist nationalist milieu operate. Nowadays, this milieu is largely organised and fronted by a handful of political organisations that might adequately be described as ‘the far-right’. With some groups such as the National Front have been around in

the West Midlands region since the 1970s, today they are largely impotent. Today, others like the BNP and EDL have filled that void and have found a much greater resonance and foothold in both mainstream and street political landscapes. One way they have achieved this has been on the back of one of the far-right's greatest coups, switching from targeting individuals and communities on the basis of markers of 'race', ethnicity or nationality to targeting them on the basis of markers of religion. More specifically, these markers have been those relating to Islam and Muslim-ness.

It is without any doubt that a significant factor in this has been the impact of events such as the attacks on 9/11 in New York⁵⁰² and more recently, the events surrounding the 7/7 public transport bombings in London, both of which resulted in backlashes against Muslims and their communities both here in the UK and elsewhere across Europe and the Western world. As well as encouraging physical reprisals, these events have also raised feelings of apprehension, suspicion and fear about Muslims and Muslim communities both here in the West Midlands and elsewhere. As mentioned in the previous sector, in the region – especially the Black Country – this has been particularly impacting because of the so-called 'Tipton Taliban' being held in extrajudicial detention by the US Government in Guantanamo Bay.

Having noted how the Daily Telegraph reported on the divisive impact on the local community⁵⁰³, it was not long after this news broke that the BNP began to make political inroads in the area by gaining seats on local councils in Sandwell and Dudley (whilst Tipton is situated in Sandwell it also forms the border between Sandwell and Dudley). Despite those who were being held having been released without charge in 2004, threats of revenge attacks on the individuals involved as well as their families and wider communities have continued. As an investigation by the BBC earlier this year into how members of Tipton's Muslim community feel about the fallout from the 'Tipton Taliban', many believe that its legacy has cast a long shadow on the area⁵⁰⁴.

Someone who has been well placed to observe and understand the way that the far-right have changed and the effect this has had on the Sandwell area is Dave Allport, Project Manager for REWIND⁵⁰⁵. REWIND is a Sandwell based organisation that currently works with young people on the streets of the West Midlands and in over 70 other locations across the UK. Working with young people to challenge misconceptions about identity, citizenship and belonging amongst others, the organisation was established as a direct response to the activities of far-right groups in the West Midlands in particular the divisive and damning messages they were spreading. Working alongside Dave Allport at REWIND is Denise Maxwell. Denise offers an insight into how this change of emphasis – from race to religion – has begun to take root in the perceptions and attitudes of young people in the area:

Now people talk about the culture of the country changing...the way that the far-right is changing and the messages that are coming out are much more complex. I was in a school last week and a young woman – she was in year nine – was talking about the fact that if an Asian guy was to call me a white whatever I'd call him a 'Paki' back. But if a black guy was to call me it, I wouldn't call him a 'nigger'. I said why? And she said I don't know, that's just the way it is, you know, I've got a lot of black mates and that but I wouldn't feel bad about calling anyone a 'Paki'.

Sounding like what might have historically been described as 'racism', Denise goes on to explain how this is in fact different and part of a much wider process. She continues:

It's all part of the Islamophobia, it's like everyone else against the Muslims and I think that's a huge sentiment at the moment. So we're now seeing young black people saying the same things that were said about their own grandparents...and I think that's an interesting shift as it's a far-right point

of view that is coming from a black person.

When asked what this means, both Maxwell and Allport agree that the far-right has successfully been able to influence and change people's attitudes and ideas. Having said that, those working at REWIND do not believe that the far-right have achieved this on their own: far from it.

People have already got this fear of Muslims, dislike etc because of the diatribe from the media and I think the far-right have just tapped into that. It's the easy way to get into people's heads. You can kind of tap into that, then drip-feed other things later when you've kind of got it all worked out.

And this, according to those well placed to have seen and experienced the change and subsequent impact of this in recent years has meant that Islamophobia and anti-Muslim, anti-Islamic attitudes and expressions are nowadays a much wider and far more acceptable "sentiment or a vibe" in the region.

In terms of the far-right in Sandwell – an area just outside Birmingham that includes towns such as Oldbury, Tipton and West Bromwich – and the wider Black Country, Allport offers some insight. For him, far-right groups have been becoming more active. In recent years, Sandwell has seen around five different groups participating in the more formal political structures – local, national and European elections – at the same time as many others being active at street or grassroots level. This has resulted in there being a number of 'hot spots' in the area, areas where the far right have a particular stronghold. For Muslims – and indeed others from black and minority ethnic communities – this has resulted in them making conscious choices not to go to these areas for fear of being attacked: "...places like Tipton... Princes End, the Tibbington Estate, Prior Park in Wednesbury and Yew Tree Estate which is just on the Walsall border".

Illustrating the extent to which the far-right has been active in Sandwell and the broad spectrum of groups and organisations that make up that collective entity, Allport recalls how "not that long ago" the Ku Klux Klan were active in the area and had even burnt crosses on one estate.

More successful in making inroads into the mainstream of local politics in the Black Country has been the BNP. Winning its first two council seats on Sandwell council in 2003, by 2007 the BNP had increased its presence to four. In doing so, it had been distributing leaflets in the area that showed an image of the bus carcass from 7/7 emblazoned with the message, "Multiculturalism Kills"⁵⁰⁶. Having found this growing success in the area – and an audience that was receptive to its message – the BBC began to report that Sandwell was one of the Party's prime targets⁵⁰⁷. As the BBC put it:

Thousands of voters who would once never have looked beyond Labour have switched allegiance to the BNP...In Sandwell the BNP already has four councillors. In next month's council election it is fielding 15 candidates in the 24 seats and its political opponents fear the party could win in up to half a dozen wards. At Princes End in Tipton, there is a strong possibility that for the first time in Britain the BNP could end up holding all three seats in a single ward.

The BBC report continues:

On the streets BNP supporters aren't hard to find. There is open and unblushing backing for a party traditionally seen as racist, xenophobic and homophobic. Some voters might struggle to articulate their reasons, but they can be summed up with the thought that 'the BNP would put British people first'.

Whilst these predictions have not come to fruition, the receptivity to the far-right in the

area remains. Despite the BNP having put up candidates in all 24 wards in this year's local elections, it failed to win a single seat. Those involved with REWIND are keen to stress that the threat has not gone away. In Sandwell it was more to do with the fact that the far-right vote fragmented. In terms of actual votes, the number cast across the different far-right candidates remained largely the same.

Those from within the far-right have also been extremely successful in establishing a strong presence and voice in Sandwell. For REWIND, one way that they have achieved this has been through hijacking the annual St George's Day Parade. Denise Maxwell explains:

[Sandwell's] St George's Day parade is the biggest in the country and although St George's is a celebration of the patron saint, it attracts a lot of far-right support. Ours gets advertised on far-right websites where people are encouraged to come to it. A few of the years, Nick Griffin and a couple of other leaders from the BNP have attended...

For her, this is clear evidence of the way in which those from within the far-right see Sandwell: as a key area for their message and for them politically. Referring to the fact that Sandwell is rarely known beyond the West Midlands and that it exists in the shadow of its immediate neighbour Birmingham, she continues, "coming from wherever he [Nick Griffin] comes from too little old Sandwell speaks volumes".

And the evidence from the St George's Parade is that those from within the far-right have used it to full effect. As well as prominent figures from the BNP and other far-right groups attending, the 2008 Parade included loyalist paramilitary groups from Northern Ireland who even brought their own pipe and drum bands with them.⁵⁰⁸ That same year, the BNP were circulating newsletters that tried to stir up trouble on the basis that the 'Tipton Taliban' had lived nearby ⁵⁰⁹. As a direct response to what it saw as the infiltration of the far-right, Sandwell Council cut the funding from the event the following year. Despite this, the event went ahead using independently raised funds and in 2009 – the first year that the Parade was not Council funded – it attracted 20,000 people including Griffin again and BNP Deputy Leader, Simon Darby. Because of the withdrawal of funding from the local authority, the message from the far-right was that this was clear evidence of 'political correctness' in Sandwell, a culture that meant that it was ashamed to celebrate English heritage. The Parade became – indeed it already was – a totem for those from within the far-right to spread their messages of hate.

25. Dudley, the far-right and the 'super mosque'

Adjacent to Sandwell is Dudley where, unsurprisingly, the far-right has also been extremely active. The first sign that the far-right was making some headway in Dudley was in 2003 when Simon Darby won the Castle and Priory ward in local council elections with around 43% of the vote. Despite losing the seat by just 36 votes the following year to Labour, Dudley remained a key target for the BNP and indeed retained a presence. In the 2005 General Election it polled around 4,000 votes in Dudley North, just under 10% of the vote before coming close to winning Coseley East in the 2006 local elections. In the same elections, it also did well in St James ward. As a feature in the Observer noted at the time, the BNP were "particularly determined to sound its knell in Dudley and neighbouring Tipton, industrial suburbs of Birmingham that are also home to a growing minority Muslim community"⁵¹⁰. And it was the Muslim community that the BNP paid special attention to. As Darby clarified, "We are giving voice to the concerns of ordinary people...Yes, part of it is still about race. But particularly after 9/11 and 7/7, things have changed: the new issue is Islam"⁵¹¹. But it was an anonymous quote from a Dudley local that highlighted the overriding issues that underpinned support

for the far-right, “they’re taking the piss...They’re talking about building a new mosque and a Muslim village in Dudley”.

As Reeves, Abbas and Pedroso state, throughout its various campaigns, the BNP made much of its opposition to the ‘super mosque’⁵¹², although the BNP were not a lone voice in the area. Joining them and possibly making greater inroads on the back of its vocal opposition was the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP). Spearheaded by Councillor Malcolm Davis, Davis was first elected as a Liberal Democrat councillor in 2000 before defecting to UKIP in January 2005. Staying elected until May 2007, Davis was back as a councillor within a year being re-elected for UKIP in 2007 in St James where he openly opposed the proposed mosque. In 2006, 2007 and 2008, where both the BNP and UKIP put forward candidates for local elections in Dudley and both vigorously campaigned against the building of the mosque, the combined average vote was never less than 30% of all votes cast, such has been the opposition to the mosque and the resonance it has with the electorate⁵¹³.

It is worth stressing that despite the fact that the proposed mosque has been central to the political landscape of Dudley for almost a decade now, it remains a mosque that to the present day still has not had one brick laid or even had the ground on which it is proposed prepared for building. Because of this, it offers something of a unique insight into how the far-right have been able to latch onto local issues to identify an area for campaigning, propagate its message, find a political foothold, and increase anti-Muslim and Islamophobic sentiments to ultimately divide and drive wedges between different communities.

The Dudley mosque issue began in the late 1990s following a series of land swaps between Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council (Dudley MBC) and the Dudley Muslim Association (DMA). Eventually acquiring disused land in Hall Street, the DMA put forward plans to build a new mosque and community centre for the town that the DMA claim would be open to all members of the local community. The DMA argued the need for the new mosque on the basis that the existing mosque in the town – a formerly disused building that had been subsequently converted into a religious space – was now too small for the number of worshippers using it each week. Starting with opposition being voiced by a few local people, that same opposition quickly escalated as it was taken up by both far-right and right wing political parties from inside and outside the Dudley area. Focusing on the size and scale of the ‘super mosque’, much of the discourse of the opposition focused on a number of different issues: the ‘giant minaret’; the ‘Muslim village’ that would surround the mosque; and the belief that the mosque would overshadow the town’s medieval castle, market and ‘top church’, an old church that sits atop one of the highest points in the town and is visible from the surrounding area.

Opposition also focused on the belief that the mosque would be out of keeping with the architecture of the town, that the community centre – despite assertions to the contrary – would be limited to Muslims only, and that the mosque’s location would cause traffic congestion. It must also be stated that a lot of opposition focused on the differences between Islam and Christianity, especially the ‘Christian ethos’ of the area and as Malcolm Davis put it, the community centre’s failure to meet the needs of “our Christian society”⁵¹⁴.

Khurshid Ahmed from the DMA reflects on the opposition to the mosque’s initial plans:

The true facts have never been given much attention...it’s all been distortion and hype. And public opinion in this area has been majorly influenced by this hype which has been mainly the gross distortion of the dimensions of the mosque.

For him, the opposition shown towards the mosque was clearly Islamophobic and because

of this, was a catalyst for the BNP, UKIP, EDL and others. In fact he claims that the campaign against the mosque has become something of a recruitment tool for the far-right appearing on far-right, neo-Nazi, Islamophobic and racist websites in the UK, Europe and even in the United States. For him, the mosque campaign has been routinely used as justification for promoting Islamophobic and anti-Muslim, anti-Islamic messages. This was also the reason why, according to Ahmed, that Councillor Davis was able to garner so much support for his petition against the proposed mosque. Gathering more than 22,000 signatures, Ahmed claims that many of those were from outside the area, gathered in places as far away as Bridgnorth in Shropshire. Maybe more pertinently however was the suggestion by Ahmed that some of those supporting the petition were from 'evangelical Christian' churches in Dudley and its surrounds. Whilst this may have been so, Ahmed claims that opinions have since changed.

Quoting a discussion Ahmed had with a senior figure from one of the churches in question, Ahmed says that the Christian minister told him:

I am no longer against your mosque. I will not be supporting it but I will not be opposing it either...if it is a place of worship, why should we be opposing it?

For Ahmed this was a significant development because whilst some divisions between different faith groups were initially evident – where some were clearly drawing upon religious and faith issues and language as a means of opposing the mosque – these appear to have passed in recent years with the different faith communities, or their representatives at least, appearing to be in relative agreement.

It is interesting the way in which the BNP and others have adopted what might best be described as a 'Christian' identity. Whilst the BNP has recently established a group called the Christian Council of Britain, there is little evidence to suggest that such a development has little other value except to further 'other' Islam and Muslims. In doing so, Islam and Muslims become seen to be unlike who 'we' – the majority culture – believe we are: against 'our' culture, 'our' way of life, 'our' religion. Faith groups are clearly aware of this and would seem to be an issue in Dudley where the local interfaith group, the Dudley Interfaith Network made reference to this in one of its press releases. Whilst referring to the EDL in particular, the sentiment applies to all groups that have sought to use Christian iconography and language to support their views:

The EDL are also known for using faith to promote their agenda, with a clear anti-Muslim stance, and when pressed bring the church and other faiths into the debate to justify their position... there will no doubt be an attempt to use faith, particularly the Christian faith to justify extremist views and violence.⁵¹⁵

In interviews with the current minister of St Thomas' in Dudley town centre – the 'top church' that has been used so detrimentally by those opposing the mosque – the Reverend Anthony Attwood takes a particular stand against the use of Christianity by the far-right as a means of terrorising Muslim communities. "Where is the evidence for their appreciation of the Christian gospels?" he asks. "Christianity is merely a banner behind which people are uniting...it is sad that so much publicity [about the mosque] has been negative especially when it has been linked to Christianity". Somewhat tongue in cheek, Rev Attwood added that given the number of empty seats in his church and the mounting bills needed to maintain the upkeep of the church, it might be good to see some of those using the 'top church' to justify their arguments against the proposed mosque in church on a more regular basis. Having said that, Rev Attwood acknowledges some genuine concerns being expressed in Dudley about the alleged size of the minaret:

It was a concern for some but we moved on...it can't be a genuine concern or worry because a true expression of Islam has to be more than a competition with the weather vane of our church.

He confirms the view of Ahmed and his understanding of how faith communities in the area have come together in support of each other:

In Dudley, the faith communities are all building on links for peace and recognition. We have common interests, an appreciation of the divine and the connection of belief...there is much to draw people to Dudley and we must together concentrate on the positive features.

The petition pulled together by Cllr Davis was eventually presented to Dudley MBC and in February 2007, the Development Control Committee voted unanimously against the plans for the mosque. Outside the Council House, opponents to the mosque cheered and sang hymns to celebrate the decision. However, the matter was far from over. In response, the DMA appealed against the council's decision to the Secretary of State and a Public Local Inquiry was held before a Planning Inspector in June 2008. The Inspector's decision was to allow the appeal and grant planning permission for the mosque. But as with the DMA, Dudley MBC decided to challenge the decision in the High Court, a decision that Ahmed argues demonstrated the "anti-Muslim stance..." adopted by Dudley MBC which he goes on to add "...is tantamount to institutional Islamophobia".

Once in the High Court, Dudley MBC's challenge was thrown out and the DMA were given outline permission to build. At the time, it was reported that Dudley MBC's battle against the DMA had cost taxpayers around £16,000 yet still the battle continued. Immediately after the decision from the High Court, Dudley MBC announced that the land swap agreement made with the DMA in 2001 had not been honoured in that the deal stipulated the mosque had to be "substantially built" by the end of 2009 or it could buy back the land at an agreed price. Dudley MBC leader, Councillor Anne Millward announced that she was seeking to hold talks to see if the mosque could now be stopped on those grounds.⁵¹⁷

Despite the focus of attention having been on the battle between Dudley MBC and the DMA, many of those active within the far-right and indeed the right of the political mainstream maintained a keen interest in events. Following the announcement by the High Court, some from within the far-right were invigorated. Opposition was stepped up and the relatively newly formed EDL entered the debate by beginning to voice its opposition to the 'super mosque'. Announcing a march in Dudley for 3 April 2010 – the Saturday between Good Friday and Easter Sunday – the EDL amassed around 3,000 of its supporters in the town to protest against the mosque. The EDL claim that this was its biggest march against 'sharia and Islamic extremism' to date and was welcomed by the people of Dudley⁵¹⁸:

As the coaches were approaching Dudley, many local people lined the streets and cheered the EDL. It was more like a Roman triumph or a Royal visit than the arrival of political activists. People lined the streets and cheered, they came to their house windows and front doorsteps to show their support, and cars sounded their horns in fanfare. It would appear that the people of this small Midlands town, like the people of so many towns and cities across the United Kingdom, feel completely abandoned and let down by local and national politicians who ignore their views and concerns and treat them with contempt. The people of Dudley, and Britain as a whole, are desperate for real change and many see the EDL as agents of that change, change that politicians seem incapable of initiating.

On the day, official reports suggest that the market in the town centre was closed and shops were boarded up in anticipation of there being violence, something that cost Dudley MBC an estimated £150,000.

Despite "brief outbreaks of disorder"⁵¹⁹, the march and the counter protest arranged by Unite Against Fascism (UAF) that was publicised as celebrating the diversity of the area

passed largely without incident. The picture though was quite different for Khurshid Ahmed: “The EDL were using Dudley as its flagship...they were coming here to use the mosque as an excuse” to provoke trouble between Muslims and non-Muslims. And it would seem that this was the view of many in Dudley, especially those with political responsibilities. Conservative council leader Anne Millward, Labour’s David Sparks, Liberal Democrats Dave Tyler and even UKIP’s Malcolm Davis all signed a public notice that was printed in the local Express & Star newspaper that called on the EDL to abandon its plans to march.⁵²⁰ And many of the fears expressed by these individuals would appear, if Ahmed is right, to have come to fruition as a result of the march in the town.

Despite official sources suggesting that few incidents of note occurred, Ahmed tells of how young Muslims in the area became increasingly agitated on the day of the march as rumours circulated that the EDL had been allowed to attack the existing mosque:

Somebody said that the mosque was under attack and so these young people [young Muslims] broke through the police cordon and confronted the EDL coming from the other side of Wolverhampton Street and so there was a bit of a running battle...police had to use tear gas to separate the two groups...

It is interesting to see how the presence of far-right groups such as the EDL can cause and further exacerbate tensions between communities. Once tensions had been calmed, Ahmed goes on that tempers remained high:

...they [Muslim youths] still thought the mosque was under attack but only one car at the mosque was damaged and a few stones had been thrown but no real damage. But still, these young people were very, very provoked and some people were suggesting they should go and attack the Priory [a local housing estate] where there’s a BNP stronghold.

Far from condoning the thoughts of some of these individuals, Ahmed uses the situation that ensued to illustrate the way in which such marches create tinderbox conditions where violence and unrest become very real possibilities.

Just two months after the march, the EDL were back in Dudley again, staging a rooftop protest against the mosque on the disused building currently occupying the site in Hall Street. Complete with banners – such as ‘no to the burka’ – and food to last them a week, the EDL announced that their supporters also had a PA system through which they were going to play the call to prayer five times a day to let local people know what having a mosque on the site would be like⁵²¹. Soon after, local police removed the EDL supporters amid growing tensions in the area. Within another few days, Dudley MBC had announced that it had come to an agreement with the DMA to ditch plans to build a new mosque on the site in preference of developing the existing mosque. *The Daily Telegraph* reported that Councillor Les Jones said:

The current mosque is not really fit for purpose and we have been working with them to come up with some plans and would have been looking to submit an outline planning application in the next few months. The DMA can achieve their ambition of a new mosque which won’t impinge on the lives of anyone else in Dudley, and meanwhile we can return Hall Street to council use.⁵²²

The Telegraph went on to add how Cllr Jones stressed that delicate discussions about the future of the mosque had been taking place for over 18 months and that the decision and subsequent announcement had not been as a result of the EDL protests: “This is not a victory for the protesters – we have been working at this for some time, and I have always believed there was a better approach”. In interviews with Khurshid Ahmed, none of this had been mentioned.

Despite the announcement, the EDL have continued to protest against the mosque not least

because the existing mosque is opposite the town's medieval castle. As such, they argue that any redevelopment of the site would have a detrimental impact on the town's most prominent and recognisable landmark. Consequently, the EDL have arranged a further march in the town whilst Cllr Malcolm Davis – despite having previously signed a joint statement rejecting the EDL in Dudley – has shown empathy towards them and their plight.

The DMA meanwhile has said that it will proceed with plans to build the mosque on Hall Street unless a “viable” alternative is proposed by Dudley MBC: “We are waiting to see details of the offer, if the offer is not suitable we will have no alternative but to pursue Hall Street”⁵²³. The outcome of the situation remains unclear but it would seem that given the ongoing activities of the EDL and those such as Cllr Davis, the mosque will continue to be an issue that will and indeed will be used to cause and exacerbate tensions and divides between different communities in the town. In addition, the mosque will continue to provide a basis upon which further anti-Muslim and Islamophobic attitudes and messages will be justified. All involved will take what they will suggest are unflinching positions and so will further entrench their bi-polar positions. In the process, the real losers will be the people of Dudley who will be pulled and pushed in different directions that will undeniably have negative impacts and consequences on community relations and community cohesion in the area. It will also act as fuel for those wanting to spread further hatred against Muslims and their communities.

26. Stoke-on-Trent, the far-right and the first ‘white martyr’

Like in the Black Country, the far-right has been active in ‘the Potteries’ also, another post-industrial area where levels of poverty and deprivation are relatively high. As the *New Statesman* wrote just last year, Stoke provides the strongest example of how the BNP has become adept at exploiting apathy. At the time of that article, nine BNP members sat on the city council. In fact BNP leader Nick Griffin was quoted as describing Stoke as his Party’s “jewel in the crown”⁵²⁴. With the article stating that racism was endemic in Stoke, it added that Stoke’s ‘racism’ was largely directed towards the city’s 9,000 inhabitants of Asian descent that were also Muslim. Citing an incident shortly after 9/11 where a mosque in Normacot was defaced with a pig’s head, the article explained:⁵²⁵ “The city is split and completely insular, each town is like a tribe of its own, and the culture lends itself very well to the BNP. They don’t like outsiders here”. Somewhat unwittingly, the article concludes by noting how in the small office of two local BNP councillors, one of the walls is plastered with anti-Muslim headlines that had been torn from newspapers such as the *Sun* and *Daily Express*.

Campaigning on an anti-Muslim, Islamophobic basis is not unheard of in Stoke and its surrounds. Whilst the *Guardian* more recently exposed BNP campaigns that offer, “a pungent mix of nostalgia and conspiratorial claims about immigrants and Islam, from the apocryphal Muslim taxi drivers who ‘piss in bottles and throw them out of cabs’ to the council giving housing priority to immigrants”⁵²⁶, similar campaigns have been undertaken for almost a decade. In May 2001, the BNP were distributing a leaflet outside Longton High School – where a large number of Pakistani heritage pupils attended – that spoke of a ‘race war’ taking place in the school. Promoted by Michael Coleman, the then BNP branch secretary, Coleman was until recently a councillor who sat as chair of the children and young people’s overview and scrutiny committee. More worryingly, since June 2008 he has also been a governor at Longton High⁵²⁷.

It is worth noting the relevance and message of the BNP in May 2001, not just because of the fact that it preceded the events of 9/11 and the more widely acknowledged shift from

'race' to religion by the far-right in its campaigning, but because areas of the city, in particular Hanley, were home to serious disturbances in the summer of that year. Whilst official sources that considered the disturbances in the summer of 2001 tended to overlook the role of the far-right in places such as Hanley and Stoke as relevant causal factors, an investigation commissioned by the Forum Against Islamophobia & Racism (FAIR) made the point more forcefully:

*far-right groups and organisations, in particular the NF and the BNP, were present and politically active in Bradford prior to and indeed on the day of the outbreak of the disturbances. It is also without doubt, that the same organisations and groups were also present and active in Burnley and Oldham, as well as Leeds, Hanley and Stoke-on-Trent where much smaller scale disturbances also occurred.*⁵²⁸

As with Dudley, the activities of the far-right cannot be underestimated in terms of the impact on community relations and tensions in the area. An example of this can be seen in Stoke following the sentencing of Stoke resident Habib Khan who was handed an eight year jail sentence for the manslaughter of BNP activist Keith Brown, his next door neighbour. Khan was unanimously cleared of murder but convicted of manslaughter after a jury heard that he had endured racism, threats and violence from Brown and his son, Ashley Barker for a number of years. Ashley Brown was also a BNP activist who Khan was also convicted of for wounding. Khan's son, Azir Habib Saddique, was cleared of the same charge. For the BNP, the death of Brown offered a unique opportunity, one that they used to present the killing as an act of white martyrdom. Whilst Simon Darby was blogging from inside the trial, Michael Coleman took to the steps following the trial to announce: "We advise anybody who gets angry: get involved with the BNP"⁵²⁹.

For the Daily Mail, the response by the BNP was rather unsavoury:

*The potency of the far right claiming its first martyr dawned last year as six BNP councillors shouldered their fallen comrade's coffin. To some white supremacist websites, Mr Brown is being built up as the Horst Wessel of the Potteries, a British equivalent of the Nazi songwriter shot dead by a Berlin communist in 1930. An online book of Condolence hails Mr Brown as 'the first nationalist victim of Islamic jihad against Great Britain'*⁵³⁰

In the same week that Khan was convicted, the BNP posted a video on YouTube. As the Daily Mail described it⁵³¹:

It begins with a hearse arriving at St Batholomew's church in Stoke. On one side of the coffin is a wreath which spells KEITH, on the other DADDY. Mr Brown was a father of seven. He was 52 when he was fatally stabbed outside his home last year. It would be difficult to imagine more emotional footage.

Among the mourners at his funeral is a middle-aged man in black suit and tie. When he begins to speak to the camera his eyes well-up: 'It's a very sad day, almost unbearable being there with the little kids,' he says, his eyes full of tears. The tears – crocodile tears, some might think – belong to Nick Griffin, the leader of the British National Party, who barely knew Keith Brown, if indeed they met at all.

Mr Griffin and his cronies have been accused of hijacking Mr Brown's funeral – and his death. BNP members were pallbearers. They laid a floral tribute depicting the flag of St George...

...Standing outside the church, moments after the service has ended, Mr Griffin tells his online audience: 'I loathe not so much his killers as the police and authorities in this city who let down his family. They knew something like this was going to happen.'

'His family, and Keith himself, was subjected to a reign of terror by the racist neighbours

and their gang friends and the authorities did nothing about it. These people I loathe... when it's English, white victims, they simply don't care.'

For the BNP, the issue was clear. Had the death resulted in a Muslim man being killed by an "English, white" perpetrator, the whole episode would have been presented and understood in a completely different way: the death would have been Islamophobic and the perpetrator would have been immediately dubbed racist. The event was – for them at least – evidence of the 'Islamic jihad against Great Britain' and further evidence that their approach towards Muslims and Islam was justified.

Inevitably used to significant effect, and seemingly strengthening the position of the BNP, it went on the next year to consolidate its position on the local council with nine seats in total. So strong did the BNP become in Stoke that on one website, the city was described "BNP heaven"⁵³². It is maybe no surprise therefore that the BNP thought that it might be able to further strengthen its position and chose the city as its location to launch its 2010 General Election campaign and manifesto, "Democracy, Freedom, Culture and Identity" earlier this year. Targeting the city, in particular Stoke Central where Simon Darby stood as the BNP's candidate, due to the belief that it could win seats in Parliament, Michael Coleman – who was standing as candidate in Stoke-on-Trent South – wrote a letter to the Glani Noor mosque in Longton asking Muslims to support him and vote for the BNP.

In what appeared to be something of a bizarre political u-turn, Coleman justified doing so on the basis that the BNP were the only political party openly supporting the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan and because of this, Muslims should support them. If they did not and any other political did, then their votes would inadvertently support the ongoing killing of Muslims elsewhere in the world⁵³³. Largely rejected as a publicity stunt, Liberal Democrat candidate Zulfiqar Ali suggested that there was a more insidious message behind the letter: "They're trying to scare [Muslims], that the West is against Islam and Muslims, which is not true"⁵³⁴. Despite having high hopes for making inroads in the city in the election this year, the BNP vote fell away and they failed to win any seats in the area.

Despite this, the continued role and activity of the BNP and other far-right groups should not be underestimated. Nor should it be viewed that the threat posed by either their Islamophobic and anti-Muslim messages or the tensions they provoke can be overlooked. In January this year, the EDL targeted Hanley to march through in protest of Islamic extremism in the UK. The night before the march, a mosque in the Normacot area – the same mosque that was targeted after 9/11 – was daubed with graffiti declaring 'Islam scum' and 'EDL'⁵³⁵. Seen by some as being a direct provocation to Muslims in the area, a police spokesperson noted how "The community haven't reacted to it, so it hasn't achieved what the person who did it wanted to achieve"⁵³⁶. Despite this, the march went ahead with more than 1,200 EDL supporters attending. Carrying banners that declared "Patriotism is not racism" and "Terrorists off our streets"⁵³⁷ it was reported that marchers also chanted "Muslim bombers off our streets" as well as "If you hate all Pakis clap your hands"⁵³⁸.

Unlike other parts of the country where the BNP and EDL have sought to differentiate themselves, the Stoke march was quite unique. Alongside EDL supporters, leading party members from the BNP – both local and national – marched alongside them. Unlike the situation in Sandwell where the far-right support has been shown to fragment in recent years, it might be that quite the opposite is happening in Stoke. Whilst it is too soon to make any conclusions either way, one website suggests that the joining of political forces has put some stress on the internal politics of the BNP stronghold in the city to the extent that it is alleged

that this was one of the reasons why the former leader of the BNP in the area, Alby Walker, recently and surprisingly resigned his post.⁵³⁹

27. Nuneaton, Birmingham and Solihull

Beyond the Black Country and the Potteries, the far-right – namely the BNP – has capitalised on the resonance of its Islamophobic and anti-Muslim rhetoric by making political inroads in other parts of the region. One of these is in Nuneaton, a town on the eastern border of the West Midlands. Having narrowly lost to Labour in the Nuneaton and Bedworth by-election in 2007, the BNP achieved its first political victories in Warwickshire the following year when it secured wins in Nuneaton's Barpool and Camp Hill wards. In the same local elections, it also came close to winning the Bede ward losing it to Labour by just six votes. Earlier this year, Cllr Martyn Findlay – Nuneaton Barpool – faced a standards investigation for describing a man of Asian Muslim descent as “fucking filth” on a blog⁵⁴⁰. At the time, Findlay was the BNP's only remaining BNP councillor in Nuneaton.

In Solihull, a BNP councillor was elected in the Chelmsley Wood ward in 2006, a victory that was soon followed up with a strong result in the Kingshurst and Fordbridge wards in 2007. In fact the BNP doubled its vote in Solihull between 2004 and 2007. More disturbingly, during this same period, the average annual incidence of hate crime in the ward has almost doubled⁵⁴¹. Whilst elsewhere in the West Midlands the far-right has been less successful in making political inroads, this is not to suggest that they have been inactive in campaigning on the back of anti-Muslim and Islamophobic agendas: in fact quite the contrary. In Birmingham for instance, despite the fact that the BNP have failed to win any election, in the 2008 local council elections they fielded candidates in 40 different wards across the city and clearly tapped into the concerns of a significant minority with a campaign that was dubbed, “Islam Referendum Day”. Contesting 40 wards across the city, BRAP – a Birmingham-based national equalities and human rights organisation – soon after the elections published data that showed how the BNP finished second in one ward (Sheldon), third in 12 and fourth in 13 others⁵⁴².

Across all the wards it contested, the BNP averaged 7.52% of the vote. Whilst being below the percentage of votes gained in places like Stoke, BRAP note that had Birmingham City Council employed a system of proportional representation similar to the Greater London Assembly, the results would have been enough to give the second city its first BNP councillor. Given the large number of Muslims that reside in the city, it is worrying that such an anti-Muslim and Islamophobic campaign could have such a resonance with voters.

As well as at the formal political level, the BNP and its supporters have been active in promoting anti-Muslim and Islamophobic sentiment in the region via online resources such as the social networking site Facebook. One example of this relates to the BNP's opposition to Solihull mosque – considered in more detail later – and the Facebook group it established entitled, “Say no to Solihull mosque”⁵⁴³. Attracting over 1,600 members and more than 1,000 posts in less than a fortnight, the accompanying video was credited to the BNP in Stoke-on-Trent whilst administered from Keele. Echoing earlier pronouncements by those such as Michael Coleman following the sentencing of Habib Khan, the administrator Alex E says “if you are fed up with mosques being built get involved in the BNP”⁵⁴⁴. Many of the posts were explicitly and unashamedly Islamophobic and were, according to the UAF, an incitement to religious and racial hatred under the Public Order Act 1986. Two examples of posts from the Facebook page include:

Even if they did build a dirty mosque we would just throw pigs guts at it!!!”

And:

These bastards will not go away and until we kick them all out and send them back to their own countries we will have to continue fighting this war. But every time a Muslim blows himself up or abuses a white person or tries to take over a neighbourhood we gain more supporters. Time is actually on our side and all of Europe is itching to kick these useless perverts out of Europe. I do not know one person who wants Muslims in Europe...If Hitler hadn't gone and messed things up for nationalism we would never have let them in. Well the tables are turning and these guys are toast.

Beyond Solihull, similar Facebook groups have been set up to oppose the Dudley mosque. With routine names such as “Stop Dudley Super Mosque and Islamic Village”, others are far more explicit in their hatred: “Fuk [sic] the Dudley mosque, lets build a big fat pig there instead”. Some of the Facebook groups have supporters that number in excess of 19,000 so strong would opposition to the mosque appear to be.

Unlike elsewhere in UK where violent nationalist extremists had been caught and convicted of plotting to undertake violent campaigns against Muslim and other minority communities, there is no evidence available of this type or level of activity in the West Midlands. Nonetheless, as the report into the situation in London suggests, as the BNP and others increasingly try to be ‘legit’ the frustration felt by some of those operating on the harder fringes of the extremist nationalist milieu will need an outlet, one that might easily be transformed into more direct forms of street or more worryingly, terrorist violence⁵⁴⁵. There is no evidence to suggest that things have become as extreme as this in the West Midlands as yet. But as Simon Darby – so prominent a figure and voice for the BNP in the region – put it when commenting on former BNP member Terence Gavan who was convicted of making nail bombs to use against Muslim communities, such activities are “...the inevitable consequence of enforced multiculturalism. You are going to get more and more incidents like this”⁵⁴⁶. The warning therefore is stark and one that those from within the far-right believe will be something of an ‘inevitable consequence’.

More worrying though and more imminent is another observation from the London report, that it is highly likely that in the coming decade individuals from within the violent extremist nationalist milieu will carry out serious assaults on Muslims (both targeted and random) without recourse to bombs or other terrorist activities. In this respect, there again remains little evidence to implicate those active within that milieu. However as the next section shows, the full range of different Islamophobic and anti-Muslim hate crimes are being perpetrated against Muslims in the West Midlands. It is just that at this stage, it is unclear who these perpetrators are and whether they are part of an organised campaign or whether, as they are considered here, far more random.

28. Anti-Muslim and Islamophobic incidents

When considering anti-Muslim and Islamophobic incidents, it is worth bearing in mind that such incidents incorporate a wide array of different acts, activities, incidents and events. They are far from being a single, homogenous entity that can be easily comprehended and compartmentalised. This point was highlighted by research into the backlash against Muslims after 9/11 in the EU on behalf of the European Monitoring Centre for Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC). In its synthesis report, it suggested that anti-Muslim and Islamophobic incidents might include: low levels of aggression including such acts as verbal abuse and harassment including spitting on Muslims and pulling the hijab from Muslim women’s heads; more

serious, higher levels of aggression including physical violence, assault and at times, murder; and material attacks including graffiti and arson attacks on such entities as mosques and Islamic cultural centres as well as Islamic schools and Muslim-owned businesses⁵⁴⁷.

At the same time as noting the breadth of different incidents and activities, it is worth acknowledging that when Islamophobic or anti-Muslim hate crimes occur, the victims are highly unlikely to report such incidents to the police or other official sources. This has been an issue that has been recognised in a number of official reports and studies over the past decade including the EUMC's 9/11 report⁵⁴⁸, two further reports from the EUMC half a decade later⁵⁴⁹, the Open Society Institute⁵⁵⁰, the Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia⁵⁵¹, the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA)⁵⁵², and the London report from the EMRC that preceded this particular study⁵⁵³. This is a major issue because as the FRA stated in its findings, as many as seven out of ten incidents are not reported by the victims⁵⁵⁴. With this in mind, it is almost impossible to properly document and gauge the full extent of Islamophobic and anti-Muslim hate crimes. With this in mind, the incidents covered in this section are provided in order to offer an indicative insight into the type of anti-Muslim hate crimes being undertaken across the region. It is not – and cannot be – a full and complete picture. If the findings from the FRA are correct, then the full picture will be far more worrying and far more dangerous than the one presented here: indeed, this section may present merely the tip of the metaphorical iceberg.

As a means of organisation, the incidents referred to here are considered on a largely chronological basis, enabling a timeline of events and incidents to unfold that highlights trends but more importantly highlights the myriad of different manifestations that Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hate crime takes. Where specific areas or locations in the West Midlands region are not mentioned, it is worth stressing that this does not mean that anti-Muslim and Islamophobic hate crimes do not occur. Instead, it might just mean that such incidents are either rare or are just not reported to the police or picked up on by the media.

Whilst European research began to take the issue of Islamophobia rather more seriously after 9/11, the same could not be said at any of the national, regional or local levels in the UK. This has slowly begun to change but has only really been evident since the backlash against Muslims that became apparent after the 7/7 public transport attacks. As well as the Metropolitan Police Force in London, a survey of other police forces around the country showed a significant rise in race hate crime⁵⁵⁵. It is worth stressing here that whilst the official statistics of the time refer to 'race' rather than religious or faith hate crime, it is likely that some significant overlap exists between the two particularly as such forms of hate crime were not readily recognisable within the criminal justice system at the time. The survey showed that the rises were most dramatic in urban areas with large ethnic minority populations.

Unsurprisingly, the West Midlands was one of these areas with the survey suggesting that incidents that took place in the immediate aftermath of the 7/7 bombings had increased by 46%. Whilst few examples were put forward, under the headline Britain's Muslim scapegoats published in the Independent newspaper on the same day, it told how two Muslim workers in an Indian restaurant in North Warwickshire had become victims of a retaliatory attack leaving one stabbed, the other suffering cuts⁵⁵⁶.

One of the defining events of 2005 in Birmingham was the Lozells disturbances that took place in the city in October. Whilst Birmingham and the West Midlands have seen civil disturbances beforehand, the Lozells disturbances were markedly different in that they were the first to be widely recognised as being inter-ethnic. Whilst the official investigation

and report into the disturbances may have preferred this term⁵⁵⁷, in the media the events were being reported as being between 'blacks' and 'Asians': or more pertinently, between 'blacks' and 'Muslims'. What was interesting however was that shortly after the disturbances, a deliberate attack on Muslim graves occurred in a nearby cemetery in nearby Handsworth. Widely reported by the BBC, alongside the smashed and pushed over headstones were leaflets that contained insults against Muslims and Islam including the statement "Death to all Muslim rapists, May all your dead rot in hell". The leaflets, of which there were more than 150, were attributed to a group calling itself 'Black Nation'⁵⁵⁸.

For Muslims, the desecration of the graves was more distressing because it coincided with the start of the festival of Eid when Muslims traditionally visit graves after fasting during Ramadan. Interestingly, local MP Khalid Mahmood claimed that the attack was the work of 'outsiders' who were trying to further inflame tensions between the black and Muslim communities. Given the lack of evidence to support this, it is difficult to agree with Mahmood and not associate the attacks with those perceived to be behind 'Black Nation' and those with some allegiance to the communities where tensions existed a month before. Given that anti-Muslim and Islamophobically motivated hate crime and racially aggravated criminal damage has traditionally been seen to be something that is primarily 'white on black' to put it simplistically, the nature of the attacks in Handsworth pose a number of unanswered questions not least about the breadth and voracity of Islamophobia in non-white communities. It is interesting that five years later, the EDL marched in Birmingham behind banners that stated 'Black and White unite against Islamic extremism'.

A year later, another type of Islamophobic incident was causing community tensions in Coventry. The issue related to a Muslim woman who had been randomly attacked and punched in the face at 9:00am near the city's busy bus station⁵⁵⁹. Police confirmed at the time that the woman was deliberately singled out because of her religion and the fact that she had chosen to wear the niqab. The incident had a massive social impact on the city. With Muslim women claiming that they were too fearful to go out alone in the city even in daylight, others organised a public meeting to bring some of the issues out into the open and raise awareness of the pressure being applied to Muslim communities. Organised by City Circle and Coventry Stop the War, one of the organisers – Abdul Khan – was quoted at the time of saying that "In these times of difficulty when our very way of life is being attacked it's heart-warming to know there are people out there who understand our plight. People recognise it's not about the way people dress"⁵⁶⁰. Whilst having a significant impact in Coventry at the time, the incident highlights more widely the way in which debates and discussions about Muslims at the national and international level can have serious – and tangible – repercussions for ordinary Muslims in everyday life.

The attack on the Muslim woman occurred shortly after Jack Straw's comments about Muslim women who wear the niqab and how it was a barrier to integration.⁵⁶¹ In a period that appeared to repeatedly focus on the 'problem' of Britain's Muslim communities, the pertinence of Straw's comments should be acknowledged. As the BBC News' Home Editor Mark Easton argued, the comments were "not some reflective little observation from Jack Straw about the protocols of MP/ constituent meetings in a multicultural world. This was a quite deliberate foray into what is becoming a real debate within Westminster: Does Britain's brand of multiculturalism work?"⁵⁶²

In addition to various telephone polls in both the broadcast and print media that showed overwhelming support for Straw's comments and the 'banning of the burka' as it was routinely

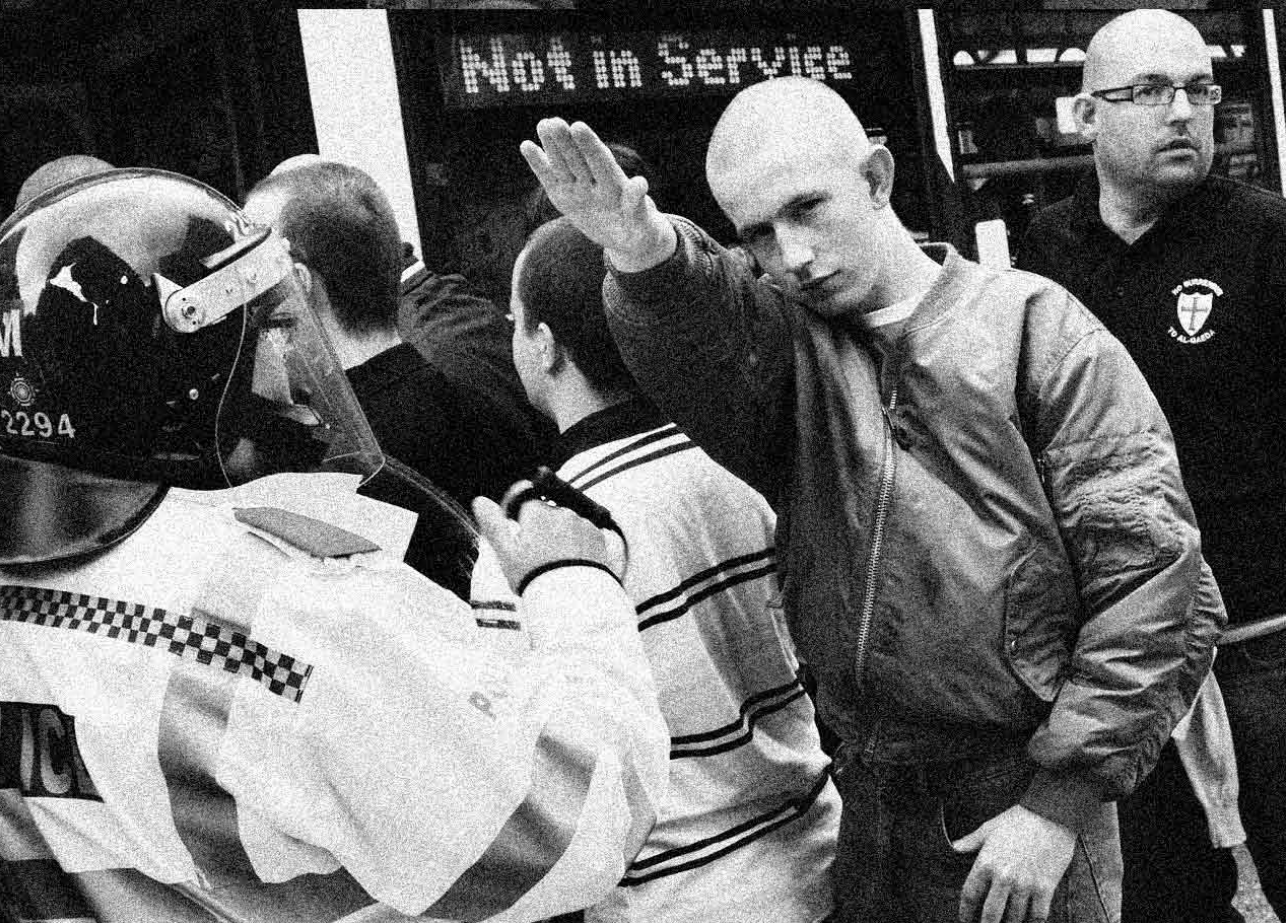
referred to, so all the main political players added their agreement including Tony Blair, Gordon Brown, Harriet Harman, and Bill Rammell amongst others. Whether the comments and rhetoric themselves can be construed as being Islamophobic remains open to question. But the impact that it had does not. As Daniel Wheelock, of the Stop the War Coalition put it:

There's definitely a strong feeling that Jack Straw's comments (on veils) and recent issues have led to people thinking it's acceptable to give that kind of abuse. It's not necessarily physical, but verbal as well. There's a definite feeling that over the last couple of months it's got worse⁶³.

In 2007, two different types of hate crime took place, the first in Tividale. Reflecting the sentiment of the attack in Coventry, Brian Frisby – a Midlands based accountant described as a ‘pillar of the community’ – verbally attacked a teenage Muslim student in the street⁶⁴. Identifying his victim because he believed she was Muslim and was wearing clothes that might be described as Islamic attire, Frisby shouted at her in the street. Before telling her to ‘go home’, Frisby accused the teenage victim of being a ‘terrorist’. Describing his actions as wholly inappropriate, Frisby was found guilty of aggravated harassment. The second incident occurred on a train in Smethwick, when Harvinder Johal verbally abused a young Muslim woman making reference to the British Muslim boxer, Amir Khan as well as all Muslims more generally because he did not like them “because they blow up trains”.

On the same journey, Johal also spat on and punched a Hindu woman. He was later sentenced to 14 months in jail and was handed a three-year Anti-Social Behaviour Order banning him from Smethwick Galton Bridge railway station. For some – including Kenan Malik – these low level incidents fail to provide evidence to suggest that Islamophobia is as dangerous and widespread as say racism in the 1970s⁶⁵. Reflecting on the fact that after 9/11 only a dozen or so serious physical attacks on British Muslims were clearly evidenced, Malik questioned the extent to which “a climate of vicious Islamophobia” was a reality in contemporary Britain. In some ways Malik is right to say that the very high level physical attacks are relatively few and thankfully so. But what he overlooks is the impact that such incidents have on ordinary people in everyday life and the fact that research has shown that the vast majority of incidents remain unreported. Having said that, whether such incidents are low level – whether being verbally abused, spat upon or having a hijab pulled from your head – this should not detract from the fact that such incidents are unwanted and unacceptable in today’s society.

A particularly nasty and insidious incident took place in 2008 when three men from the Birmingham area were sentenced for racially aggravated harassment after subjecting a Muslim work colleague to what was described as a bullying campaign⁶⁶. During the campaign, the victim Amjid Mehmood: was forced to eat bacon on the basis that it was against his religious beliefs; had his trousers pulled down to be indecently exposed to passing motorists on the M6 motorway; was dropped off in the Lozells area of Birmingham at the time when the disturbances were taking place before his tormentors drove off whilst shouting at him that the ‘locals’ would come and get him; and was tied to public railings with duct tape before being stripped and having his clothes doused with dirty water. The three perpetrators also put a rucksack with wires protruding from it on Amjid Mehmood’s locker at his workplace and filmed some of the incidents on mobile phones⁶⁷. Described as “an appalling example of racial harassment” the three appealed against their sentencing. At the appeal, Mr Justice Pitchford refused the appeal adding that Mr Mehmood was: “A man who was vulnerable in his workplace, by virtue of his personal qualities, his minority race and in the troubled times in which he was living”⁶⁸.



The case is particularly interesting because whilst the bullying of Mr Mehmood clearly incorporated elements that focused on the prohibitions of his religious beliefs and his Muslim identity, it went through the criminal justice system on the basis of being ‘racially motivated’ as indeed have all of the examples highlighted so far. In trying to compile figures to evidence the size and scale of anti-Muslim hate crimes and Islamophobic incidents more widely, it is clear that institutional and legislative issues might also obscure the true size and scale of the issue. Having said that, the incident does highlight the way in which ordinary people are able to tap into aspects of Islam and being Muslim to intimidate, abuse and attack individuals and organisations. Given that it is generally accepted that levels of understanding about Islam and Muslims remain relatively low in society, it is interesting that the actions of those bullying Amjid Mehmood – as indeed Frisby and Johal previously – dwelt upon the idea that Muslims are terrorists.

With this in mind, another incident that occurred in the West Midlands highlights the way in which this idea permeates thinking about Muslims and Islam more widely, not just at the individual level but so too the institutional also. In Stoke in April 2008, Max Khan was held to the ground by six police officers after reports to the police that a Muslim man who was seen wearing a large rucksack with wires and aerials protruding from it was acting suspiciously outside the Potteries Shopping Centre in Hanley ⁵⁶⁹. Khan, a journalist of Muslim origin, was covering a story for BBC Radio Stoke at the time and was carrying portable radio equipment with him in his rucksack. In a statement to the Muslim News, Chief Superintendent Jane Sawyers from Staffordshire Police said that:

Our first duty in cases like this is the safety of the public. The person and our officers, and presented with this limited information, local officers immediately responded and positively acted to ensure everyone's safety. I want to apologise for any distress caused but the action taken was necessary. I am pleased with the positive and professional way the officers dealt with the incident. Bearing in mind the current national terrorism alert level we were able to resolve this incident quickly and safely.

Whilst neither the BBC nor the journalist pursued the matter any further, the incident highlights the ease with which decisions can be made based upon perceptions and understandings that attribute all Muslims with the same characteristics, qualities, abilities and capabilities. And in all of these, the idea that Muslims are terrorists looms large.

2008 was also important in the West Midlands. Whilst the Dudley mosque situation had been unfolding for some years beforehand, 2008 saw a much wider campaign against mosques beginning to take shape, one that has since fed into a much wider process where mosques and Islamic cultural centres have become increasingly targeted for anti-Muslim and Islamophobic hate crime. It is interesting that 2008 was also the year in which West Midlands Police accepted that there had been no evidence that Channel 4 or the makers of ‘Undercover Mosque’ had misled the audience or that the programme was likely to encourage or incite criminal activity. And as before, 2008 was also the year that the BNP begun to use Facebook to voice its opposition to Solihull mosque. In interviews with Issam Ghannam, an imam in Solihull, it was not just on Facebook where the BNP were being active in 2008:

they [the BNP] were also being very active in the area, spreading fear of civil unrest...

Talking about how the Muslim community had been rejected time and again by the local authority as a result of its numerous attempts to buy and develop different pieces of land in the area, the BNP were posting leaflets in the area calling for local people to oppose the “Islamification” of Solihull⁵⁷⁰. For Ghannam though, the BNP were not at the root of the issue in Solihull: “we don’t actually worry about the BNP, it’s the councillors...”

He goes on:

...when it comes to reality, they're not interested in our needs... I spoke to one councillor and he said that he was happy to shop in Sparkbrook [a nearby area of Birmingham with a high Muslim population] but he didn't want Sparkbrook to come to Solihull...it was against the will of his constituents...they don't want the Muslims to follow them to Solihull – if they have a mosque here, they fear there will be Muslim immigration.

It is interesting that when pressed on this last point, Ghannam says that he meant 'immigration' from Birmingham rather than elsewhere in the world as a means of highlighting the mentality of 'fortress Solihull'.

Ghannam says that beyond the issue of the mosque in the area, there is a "if you don't like it, tough attitude" that cuts across much of Solihull in terms of the relatively small and professional Muslim community that lives there. He openly speaks about how at the local Wake Green Leisure Centre there was a tangible reluctance to provide Muslim women-only and even women-only facilities. He also speaks of how in Solihull Hospital despite there being a significant number of Muslim staff, an adequate prayer space was reluctantly provided. Instead, Ghannam said that a wholly inappropriate part of the chapel that had a cross on the wall was offered. For him, what he describes as "institutional discrimination" against Muslims permeates large swathes of Solihull and its institutions. This has fed into tensions between communities and he provides evidence of how in one local college, these tensions have begun to spill over into aggression and violence where fighting has taken place between young Muslims and those from white British and Sikh backgrounds.

Elsewhere, Ghannam tells of how Muslim women have recalled how bus drivers have refused to stop or open the doors for them when standing at bus stops on their own. For those from the Muslim community who have been campaigning for the mosque, they have had to endure abuse and hatred for a number of years including houses being attacked and defaced with graffiti. In one extreme case, a family car was set on fire as a warning against further campaigns. Ghannam worries that if the Muslim community in Solihull continue to pursue a campaign to build a mosque it will result in further trouble and could, he puts it, become the "new Dudley".

Opposition to mosques in the West Midlands tend to be underpinned by two arguments: one is that the West Midlands is part of Britain and that Britain is a 'Christian country'; the second that a mosque – and by extension Islam – are not a part of who and what 'we' are, whether that be in terms of values, culture or landscape. Of course, some overlap and interchange between these also occurs. As in Solihull, where the latter would appear to be more relevant, so too the opposition to the conversion of Red House – a Grade II listed 19th century building – into a mosque and community centre in the Great Barr area of Birmingham.

Described as having standing-room only during a public meeting about the proposed conversion where a petition containing hundreds of signatures was presented to local authority officials, it is interesting to note the comments of some members of the Friends of Red House Park group who criticised members of the public for not showing any support for their six-year campaign to restore the vandal-hit building⁵⁷¹. That is, until plans were put forward to consider converting the building into a mosque. It would seem that only when something that appears to go against 'who we are' is proposed, does it become an issue that people feel the need to get behind and oppose. Opposition to a new mosque in Regent Street in Stoke differed to that being voiced against the conversion in Great Barr. In Stoke, opposition was much clearer:

“

Aside from opposition and campaigns against mosques – a topic we return to later in this section – the West Midlands region in 2009 was witness to some of the more high level incidents associated with Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hate crime. The first was the unprovoked violent assault of a Muslim man in his 70s in Kidderminster.

”

*This is a Christian country not a Muslim country. The building of mosques on British soil is offensive...How many mosques do we have to have?*⁵⁷²

Aside from opposition and campaigns against mosques – a topic we return to later in this section – the West Midlands region in 2009 was witness to some of the more high level incidents associated with Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hate crime. The first was the unprovoked violent assault of a Muslim man in his 70s in Kidderminster. The pensioner was returning home from a prayer meeting at the local mosque when he was approached by two men, one of whom proceeded to punch him in face. As the police said after the attack:

*This was a cowardly, unprovoked attack on a frail pensioner who was in no position to defend himself. He was on his way back from prayers at a mosque and dressed in traditional white robes. We believe he was singled out for no other reason than his appearance...Nothing was said beforehand and there was no attempt to rob him.*⁵⁷³

This attack was preceded a few months beforehand with one that had far more serious consequences. On 22 July, Birmingham taxi driver, Mohammed Arshad, was found lying in a street in the Kings Norton area of Birmingham having been repeatedly stabbed in the head. Despite being taken to hospital, Arshad died the following day. Police believed that the attack had taken place in his taxi and had been completely unprovoked. As the Muslim News reported, unprovoked racist attacks on Muslim taxi drivers or those thought to be Muslim were on the increase in the city as a result of the growing number of British soldiers that had died whilst fighting in Afghanistan⁵⁷⁴.

A month after the death of Mohammed Arshad, news broke in the region that a man had been charged over death threats to the region's – and possibly the country's – most prominent and recognisable Muslim women, Salma Yaqoob. Shortly after the 9/11 attacks, she was spat at on the streets of Birmingham, an incident she claims motivated her to become more politically active. At present, she is a Respect councillor for Sparkbrook and the Respect Party's national leader. In 2005, she was targeted by Islamic extremists groups who not only "believe the democratic process is un-democratic" but were against her because "she is a female Muslim in the public eye, [who] works closely with churches and synagogues and [who] speaks out against extremism"⁵⁷⁵. Four years later and the threat had changed.

By 2009, the threats were against her life and were from outside the Muslim community. On the 15 August, 48 year old Stuart Collins appeared in court and was charged with threatening to kill Yaqoob. As a West Midlands Police spokesman was reported as confirming:

Following an investigation, a 48 year-old has been charged with racially aggravated harassment, religiously aggravated harassment and making threats to kill.

What is interesting is that whilst the previous section recognises that there is little evidence to suggest that far-right extremists are engaging in activities in the West Midlands that are similar to those such as Terence Gavan, the examples of Mohammed Arshad and Salma Yaqoob highlight the very real propensity for threat, violence and ultimately murder that some of those who are against Muslims and Islam clearly have. This is not to suggest that all those engaging in or indeed having Islamophobic or anti-Muslim feelings are prone to such ends. This is of course not true. But it does show how some have ideas and views that they are able to justify and subsequently translate into violence and criminal activity and ultimately, the taking of another person's life.

To conclude this section, two issues need further addressing. The first is to consider whether there is a trickle down of Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hate crimes after far-right groups become active in certain areas, making links with the observations at the end of the previous

section. The second, is to look again at mosques and how they seem to be entities that not only draw together significant numbers of people to oppose them and their development, but also appear to be increasingly seen as legitimate targets for retaliatory attacks. As mentioned previously, the arrival of the EDL in Stoke earlier this year was something of a natural development considering the role and activities of the BNP in the area for much of the past decade. But whilst some might suggest that such groups are merely marching protesting and upholding their right to do so – which cannot be disputed – it is the consequence and fallout from such activities that would appear to be far more problematic.

So whilst the march itself in Stoke descended into chaos and confrontation on the streets, the trickle down impact was significant also. In addition to the Guardian article which showed that in wards where the BNP have elected councillors so the number of racially aggravated crimes is likely to rise⁵⁷⁶, so too do other consequences occur that to a far greater degree go unrecognised. So when the EDL marched in Dudley for instance, some recommended that Muslims stay away from the town centre for the day, something that might impinge on people's normal activities and routines. Likewise in Stoke, on the day that the EDL were due to march through the town, taxi firms with Muslim drivers were forced to suspend services following threats by far-right extremists and warnings by Staffordshire Police⁵⁷⁷. As one taxi firm company owner Mohammed Mushtaq put it, "...after the police warning, we decided it was not worth the risk. The drivers were too scared to carry on, so we stopped all services between 11pm and 4am".

Maybe somewhat coincidentally, a few days before the march by the EDL in Stoke and the subsequent warnings by Staffordshire Police, a Muslim taxi driver in the area suffered a vicious unprovoked attack⁵⁷⁸. Receiving significant bruising and facial injuries, 39 year old Mohammed Sajed had picked up a group of five men in Hanley. En route, he stopped in Stoke after the men asked to be taken to a cash machine. As he was stopped, he was attacked by one of the group:

...one opened my door and threw a punch at me, which knocked me over to the passenger side. Then he got inside the vehicle and started punching me in the head. He was swearing at me and using racist abuse. I thought he wasn't going to stop – I really thought he was going to kill me.⁵⁷⁹

Whilst none of the reporting allege the involvement of anyone active within the far-right, it is interesting that within days of the attack the local Police were warning of attacks on the town's Muslim taxi drivers as indeed were individuals claiming links to far-right groups.

This of course is not to suggest that the far-right were involved. But the trickledown effect can be seen in two other incidents more clearly, at least according to the victims. The first relates to the graffiti attack on Staffordshire University's Leek Road and College Road campuses where phrases such as 'No Pakis' were placed alongside Swastikas⁵⁸⁰. For some, the incident was linked to university elections where current students' union president Assed Baig was fighting to hold on to his position. Mr Baig has in the past been openly opposed to the BNP in Stoke and protested against the EDL march in January this year. According to reports in the newspaper at the time, Mr Baig believes the attack was a message to him and his Pakistani heritage: "...when they write 'no Pakis' outside the entrance to my work, I feel it is aimed at me...I cannot understand why somebody would do this, it makes me sick to my stomach"⁵⁸¹.

The second incident relates to the attack on Zahid Zanan, a delivery driver who was pelted with beer bottles by 15 youths as he returned to the take-away where he worked. His partner, Elizabeth Smith, told the local newspaper that the attack has meant that Zahid is now too

scared to leave his house for fear of reprisals on either him or his family. For Ms Smith, the link is clear:

*The incident involving Zahid has left me feeling really angry. I think it's a knock-on effect from the EDL demonstrations last month. It seems people now think it's acceptable to behave however they want.*⁵⁸²

The second issue requires us to consider again the way in which mosques in the region are perceived and how they have been used to not only draw together significant numbers of people to oppose them but so too become legitimate targets for retaliatory anti-Muslim and Islamophobic attacks. Already in the region we have considered the ongoing furore surrounding the proposed Dudley mosque and the fallout from this, the way in which the proposed Solihull mosque has had ramifications on the surrounding area both for Muslim and non-Muslim communities, how the proposed development of a disused listed building in Great Barr has garnered community opposition as indeed has the same in Stoke where the BNP, EDL and other councillors have all duly opposed further mosques in the area. Likewise too, the focus on mosques through Undercover Mosque.

So far though, the opposition has been such that it has come in the form of overt and attributable political campaigning, marches and protests, and more recently, high profile staged incidents. Since the latter part of 2009 however a more worrying trend has begun to emerge. The first of these occurred in Cradley Heath, a small town in the Black Country no more than a couple of miles from Dudley town centre. On Boxing Day last year, a fire engulfed the Cradley Heath Mosque and Islamic Centre destroying the building and countless books and resources inside⁵⁸³. It was the second time that the mosque has been targeted by arsonists in the last five years and has more recently been subjected to opposition for the fact that a new mosque is currently being built alongside the old one that was destroyed. The new mosque however will not be ready to use for a number of years leaving the community's 400 plus worshippers without facilities for the time being.

For Mr Basharat Ali, the Secretary of the mosque, the attack came as a surprise:

The neighbouring people did go against us when we applied for planning to build the mosque, there was some opposition. They said that there shouldn't be a mosque built here, that it didn't belong here but that was about ten years ago.

As he went on:

It's peaceful round here. We don't have any problems in the area. There are some problems between the local youth and the elders – you know, if they wear hats or they have beards – and they say things or shout stuff. Mostly it's like...what's his name, oh, Usama. That's it, they call out things like Usama but that's it.

Mr Ali says that at the moment, neither the Muslim community nor the Police have any clues as to who might have been behind the attack. Inadvertently though, Ali mentions something that has resonance with the way in opposition to other mosques in the area has been influenced by sources outside the area:

There's a website against the mosque. I haven't seen it, one of the young people told me about it, but it says that the mosque shouldn't be here, that it doesn't belong here. It's that sort of stuff that shapes people's viewpoints. That and the media, it shapes what people think.

In the findings of the sister report that considered Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hate crime in London, it noted how the representation of Muslims and Islam in the media, the messages of the far-right and the incidence of retaliatory attacks on Muslims were in some way linked. From the review of the same types of incidents across the West Midlands region,

it would seem that this remains true. Having already highlighted the influence of the media, Basharat Ali expanded on this when asked why the mosque might have been attacked:

Most people nowadays see every Muslim as just a terrorist and we're not. Every religion and every community has bad in it and we're no different. It's all from the media though about Islam and Muslims...I can't say that things are getting worse but you have to go back to the media. If it's a Muslim, BANG. Every time a Muslim does something they blow it up. They make it worse, they make everyone think things are worse.

Having implicated the media, Mr Ali recognises the far right too:

Some political parties are as bad, some use it for political gain, to get more votes. You see it all the time, saying things about terrorists, about Muslims... Look at the English Defence League in Dudley, they came in and marched against the mosque...it's just a mosque, there's not going to be terrorists running through there but that's what people think.

It seems that whether London or the West Midlands, the Islamophobia and anti-Muslim, anti-Islamic attacks that are becoming all too familiar and all too often are underpinned and indeed motivated by much the same processes and meanings. Whilst Dudley, Great Barr, Hanley, Solihull, and Stoke have all witnessed different manifestations of mosque opposition, it is only in Cradley Heath that destruction has formed part of that opposition. That was until a few weeks ago when another story broke in the local news about a fire at another local mosque. A further stone's throw from the sites of the Dudley and Cradley Heath mosques, on 15 June 2010 a building that was set to be taken over by the Langley Islamic Culture Centre to be used as a mosque was gutted by an arson attack⁸⁴. Sandwell Council, who had granted a short-term licence to a local Muslim organisation to explore taking it over, said that the damage meant that it was likely that the building would now have to be demolished. The fire, which took place less than 24 hours before a community meeting was to be held following objections from local residents who opposed its conversion into an Islamic centre, was started deliberately and police are now investigating. As yet, no arrests have been made and no connections to any particular groups or organisations are being made or suggested.

29. Conclusions

Being so close to Cradley Heath and Dudley, it might not be too inappropriate to suggest a link between the incidents. Given that Langley Green is in Sandwell too, where this report began its consideration of the role and presence of the far-right, it might not be too inappropriate to also suggest some links with those operating within the far-right milieu identified at the outset. If the two arson attacks are linked, then it is likely that further attacks on mosques and proposed mosques will indeed continue, particularly in the Black Country where opposition to mosques seems to be much more pronounced and stark than elsewhere in the region. If not, the situation might not necessarily be any more positive given that those such as Basharat Ali and Issam Ghannam amongst others have recognised the ongoing role of the media, the outside influence and intervention of third parties from websites, social networking sites and the like, and the ongoing campaigns of the far-right whether through the mainstream of political procedures as with the BNP or in the form of street politics as with the EDL and its preference for more direct means.

And indeed the same would appear to be true of Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hate crimes more generally across the region: attacks and opposition to mosques is just one facet of these wide-ranging and wide-reaching phenomena. In reiterating the findings from previous research, such phenomena manifest themselves – as this section has clearly shown

– in everything from low-level incidents such as name calling and verbal abuse, through attacks on mosques and cultural centres, to physical assault and murder. Whilst some prefer to focus only on those high level incidents that see everyday Muslims from across the region becoming victims of hostility, hatred and violence, when the complete picture is considered, there cannot be any differentiation on the basis of what is and what is not the most unacceptable.

Without any differentiation therefore, this exploration of anti-Muslim hate crimes and Islamophobia in the West Midlands would appear to put forward further *prima facie* and empirical evidence that demonstrates how such incidents and the assailants undertaking them are invariably motivated by negative views of Muslims and Islam that have resonance with both mainstream and extremist nationalist rhetoric as well as commentaries in the media also. And as with the findings from the London report also, the evidence available would suggest that one of the major motivating factors for hatred and violence against Muslims and the material entities of Muslims and Islam is a false belief that Muslims pose a serious and sustained security or terrorist threat.

Outside of the capital, the West Midlands is the most diverse region of contemporary Britain whether considered demographically, geographically, ethnically or religiously. Because of this, and the fact that Islamophobia appears to be a very real issue in many of the region's most diverse and densely populated areas, then it is important that the issues and incidents identified and discussed in this report are not readily dismissed or overlooked in any glib or meaningless ways. Doing so will only mean that problems will continue and the situation will deteriorate, not least because those with political and policy responsibilities will have created a seedbed from which those looking to further divide communities will be able to exacerbate tensions further and so bring about more tension and less cohesion.

Bringing about change or influencing policy to achieve the same is therefore going to be challenging. The first steps in doing so must be first for the different political and civil organisations and institutions to begin to formally recognise Islamophobia at the same time as affording it with a credible level of importance. In doing so, this will send out a very clear message, one that will challenge the overriding messages and meanings that are already widespread and inadvertently accepted in today's society. It will also go some way to voicing the fact that Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hate crime – like racism and all other forms of discrimination – should be a matter of concern to the majority in society, not just those from within Muslim communities. Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hate crime is, most urgently, a challenge for us all that none of us can legitimately turn away from.

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“

In Tower Hamlets, Muslim Bangladeshis have been systematically marginalised by the predominantly white New Labour elite that has held the reins of power in the borough for well over a decade.

”

Part Five

Barbarians at the Gates of the City

A case study in the subversion of liberal democracy in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets.⁵⁸⁵

We are conscious that members of the Labour Party and others in Tower Hamlets politics will have different perspectives on the issues raised in this narrative. We will be pleased to engage with them in our research in 2011 but for the purposes of this report we took the view that this account was a genuinely held and important Muslim perspective that helps to challenge reporting on the same issues in the mainstream media – Robert Lambert and Jonathan Githens-Mazer.

30. Barbarians at the Gates: the creation of a narrative of ‘Islamist’ infiltration

On 1st March 2010, a Dispatches documentary entitled “Britain’s Islamic Republic” aired on Channel 4, fronted by right-wing journalist Andrew Gilligan⁵⁸⁶. The documentary, which focused on the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, made some startling claims. Its general thrust was that extreme and intolerant forms of Islam were gaining ground among the borough’s 40% Bangladeshi population, and more dramatically, that “Islamist” tendencies were creeping into the democratic politics of the local Council and exerting undue influence over its decision-making process.

Gilligan gave substantial airtime to the notion that Muslim organisations – in particular the Islamic Forum of Europe (IFE) and the East London Mosque – were seeking to “infiltrate” political parties in a manner characterised as “entryist.” Their goal, it was suggested, was nothing less than a complete takeover of the levers of power in the borough with a view to imposing – as the programme’s title suggests – an “Islamic Republic.”

The programme’s bold, but thinly substantiated claims were given a credibility they would otherwise have lacked by the testimony of two prominent local politicians Cllr. Peter Golds, the leader of the borough’s Conservative Group; and Jim Fitzpatrick, Labour MP for Poplar and Limehouse and then Minister for Rural Affairs. Fitzpatrick’s presence in particular seemed to suggest that the situation in Tower Hamlets was already sufficiently serious to warrant scrutiny from more senior Labour Party officials, and indeed the general public.

At first glance, Fitzpatrick appeared to be speaking out against a dangerous plot by anti-democratic forces, risking even the opprobrium of his own party to stand up in defence of the integrity of British politics. So dire was this threat, it seemed, that Fitzpatrick was even willing to make common cause Gilligan – a notoriously anti-Labour figure, whose revelations that the case for the Iraq War had been “sexed up” came close to bringing down Tony Blair’s Labour Government⁵⁸⁷.

A closer examination of the political situation in the borough, however, suggests an alternate

narrative. This report argues that far from being set to stage an Islamist takeover of Tower Hamlets, Muslim Bangladeshis have been systematically marginalised by the predominantly white New Labour elite that has held the reins of power in the borough for well over a decade.

Using as a case study the recent political career of Cllr. Lutfur Rahman (Leader of Tower Hamlets Council May 2008 to May 2010), this report documents how some members of this loose coalition have exploited pre-existing anti-Muslim sentiment to cloak the underhand manipulations and abuses of the political process that have enabled them to maintain their ascendancy in the borough in the face of social and demographic changes that might otherwise have rendered them a political irrelevance.

31. Politics on a tightrope: New Labour in Tower Hamlets 1997-2008

The London Borough of Tower Hamlets is among the most deprived areas in the UK, with high levels of crime and anti-social behaviour, as well as overcrowding, unemployment and a life expectancy that is well below the national average. The area is divided into two parliamentary constituencies; Bethnal Green and Bow in the north of the borough (represented by Labour's Rushnara Ali since May 2010) and Poplar and Limehouse in the south (represented by Labour's Jim Fitzpatrick since 1997).

Tower Hamlets has a high proportion of ethnic minorities and approximately 40 per cent of the population are of Bangladeshi origin, with a further 10 per cent from Black and other minority groups. The Bangladeshi population is concentrated in the Bethnal Green and Bow constituency, whereas Poplar and Limehouse is dominated by white working class residents. In the last 15 years, however, the demographic profile of the borough has begun to change as young urban professionals move to the area, attracted by business opportunities in Canary Wharf and the City.

As is to be expected, perhaps, in a borough where white working classes and ethnic minority groups live side by side, Tower Hamlets has a history of racial tensions. During the 1980s and early 1990s this was reflected in the politics of the borough, as the Liberal Democrat-run Council was accused of appealing to racist sentiments and enacting policies that discriminated against ethnic minorities through its notorious "Sons and Daughters" housing policy, which gave preference on the borough's housing waiting list to the children of existing tenants, creating a de facto segregation along ethnic lines in the borough's housing stock. During the 1994 Milwall By-election, local Lib Dems distributed leaflets that were considered racially inflammatory by the party's own London Executive⁸⁸. That same year, the Liberal Democrats lost control of the Council to the Labour Party.

Labour's return to power in the borough coincided with Tony Blair's reformist New Labour project, a fact that was to cause increasing tension between Old Labour representatives of the white working class and Bangladeshi community and an emerging 'New Labour faction' that relied on increasing numbers of left-leaning urban professionals for its support. As Labour's control of the borough solidified, Tower Hamlets Council came to be characterised by a level of internal rivalry and factionalism that is the hallmark of politics in any area where a single political party dominates for any length of time.

The New Labour faction asserted its dominance early on, through the selection of Oona King as the candidate to contest the Bethnal Green and Bow Seat at the general election in 1997. King was selected from a shortlist that included local Labour stalwarts Dr Nick Fox and Sam Nevington, as well as the then relatively unknown Pola Uddin, who was the only Bangladeshi candidate. One notable omission from the list was Jalal Uddin, the most

prominent Bangladeshi politician of the time, who was seen by many as the natural candidate.

This result prompted outrage among Old Labour supporters and Bangladeshis alike, many of whom felt that Pola Uddin had been a token candidate, while King had been “parachuted in,” and that the latter’s selection was due less to her support among ordinary Labour members than the fact that New Labour’s formidable national machinery had swung in line behind her.

Having established its ascendancy, and confident, perhaps, that the borough’s more deprived residents had no option but to vote Labour, the New Labour faction pursued policies that neglected their needs and focused instead on attracting large numbers of more affluent residents who would improve the borough’s average rating on the national deprivation index.

This approach is exemplified by two emblematic cases. The first is the fate of the Ocean Estate in Stepney, where Tony Blair launched the New Deal for Communities in 1997, and pledged to transform the Estate. Over a decade later – and despite the large number of expensive one and two-bedroom flats that have been built across the borough to cater to urban professionals – the Ocean Estate remained one of the most dilapidated in the country until Lutfur Rahman pushed through its regeneration.

The second case is that of the Rich Mix “flagship arts and cultural centre,”⁵⁸⁹ supported by Oona King, as well as the then Leader of the Council Michael Keith. Despite receiving an initial £3.9 million from the Council, including an £850,000 loan that has yet to be repaid, many felt that the centre was a white elephant. As one news report puts it: “Throughout its conception, development and subsequent operation it has...been met with criticism from locals and political representatives who feel it has proved wasteful and failed to provide a focal point for people in the area.”⁵⁹⁰ In July 2010, the Council’s Leader, Helal Abbas, agreed a further £2m in funding, a decision strongly welcomed by the Chair of the Rich Mix management board, one Michael Keith.

However, the New Labour faction’s failure to meet the needs of the borough’s most deprived Bangladeshi and white working class residents began to have electoral consequences, as Oona King lost out to a stunning victory by the Respect Party’s George Galloway at the 2005 general election. The following year, Respect won 12 seats on the Council at the local elections, including that of the then Leader Michael Keith – making them the largest opposition party⁵⁹¹. The Conservatives won 7 seats in the south of the borough – the first time that any conservatives had ever been elected in Tower Hamlets.

In May 2008, Labour became aware that a new direction was needed, and a broad coalition of councillors from across the three factions elected Lutfur Rahman – a successful Bangladeshi lawyer with working class roots as Leader of the Council. It was hoped that Rahman could unite the interests of the borough’s deprived communities and more affluent residents in order to win back support for Labour and rebuild the progressive coalition that had swept the Party to power in the 1990s.

However, Rahman’s brand of left-wing populism represented a direct threat to the established hierarchy within the Tower Hamlets Labour Party. Previously, the New Labour faction had maintained control of the borough by exploiting existing fissures in the Bangladeshi community along with racial tensions between Bangladeshis and the white working class. By harnessing the support of all of these groups, Rahman seemed capable of bringing together a coalition that was sufficiently strong to challenge their decade-long dominance of the borough.

This report documents the process by which the New Labour faction went on to exploit the anti-Muslim sentiment that came to the fore after 9/11 and the 7/7 bombings in order

to maintain its ascendancy within the Tower Hamlets Labour Party and extinguish the only credible threat to that ascendancy: Cllr. Lutfur Rahman. It argues that fears of ‘Islamist extremism’ have been utilised at a strategic level to convince the Labour Party hierarchy to keep Tower Hamlets in “special measures” – an effective ‘state of emergency’ that has enabled a whole series of constitutional abuses designed to undermine support for Rahman. It documents some of the most glaring abuses in full before describing how accusations of ‘Islamism’ have been used to impact on specific events to place Rahman and his supporters in politically difficult situations a non-Muslim is unlikely to have faced.

32. The exception that breaks the rule: the use of the ‘Islamist’ paradigm to justify a decade of “Special Measures” in Tower Hamlets.

Tower Hamlets Labour Party has been in “special measures” for more than a decade, to the increasing frustration of its Party members⁵⁹². The measures were instituted by the Regional Party in response to concerns about a Bangladeshi ‘bloc vote.’ In addition to granting the Regional Party sweeping powers to vet new members, suspend the Party’s internal democratic processes and take charge of disciplinary proceedings, “special measures” place the selection and deselection of candidates in the hands of a few powerful officials. Indeed, “special measures” have the same essential characteristics as a so-called ‘state of emergency,’ whereby state authorities are free to override the law and even the constitution in the interests of national security.

The prominent sociologist Giorgio Agamben has argued that the institution of a ‘state of emergency’ or ‘exception’ is one of the foremost tools by which anti-democratic forces working within modern liberal democracies justify the abrogation of due process and the rule of law, and asserts that in many societies, the state of exception has now become the rule⁵⁹³. This certainly appears to be the case in Tower Hamlets, where, according to one senior party member, “[we] have never been given either a satisfactory explanation as to why we are in “special measures” or a roadmap to get out of them.”⁵⁹⁴

Although “special measures” appear to have been justified in the past by fears of a ‘Bangladeshi bloc vote’ that had common currency in local and regional circles in the 1990s, such narratives inevitably began to lose traction in a post-MacPherson and supposedly post-racial society. But 9/11 and the 7/7 London bombings helped to create a new paradigm in race-relations in the UK, one that was based not on ethnicity but on religious affiliation and was at pains to draw the distinction between ‘good moderate Muslims’ and ‘bad extremist Muslims.’

The Tower Hamlets New Labour faction may have spotted an opportunity in this emerging discourse to win back the voters they had lost without altering their policies: by appealing to increasing anti-Muslim sentiment, they could win back white working class votes without appearing overtly racist; and by drawing on the popular distinction between ‘moderate’ and ‘extremist’ Muslims, they could split the Bangladeshi vote and once more ensure that the left-leaning middle classes held the balance of power in the Labour Party and the borough’s politics as a whole.

Throughout Rahman’s time as Leader of the Council and possibly before, members of the Tower Hamlets New Labour faction have taken advantage of common fears of ‘Islamist’ extremism – what this report refers to as the ‘Islamist’ paradigm – to convince the Labour Party hierarchy to keep the borough in “special measures,” which would permit them to dispense with the Party’s rulebook and pursue their own agenda.

This has been achieved both directly, by appealing to a tribal memory of the 1980’s attempt

by the Militant Tendency to infiltrate the Party, and indirectly, by bringing the a narrative of 'Islamist infiltration' into the mainstream media in the lead-up to the most difficult election the Party has faced since 1992, thereby creating public pressure for the Party to keep Tower Hamlets under the closest possible scrutiny. East End journalist Ted Jeory has indicated in his private blog that such uses of the 'Islamist' paradigm are indeed deliberate, stating that allegations of 'links' to the IFE are "partially designed to scare Ken Clark, the director of the London Labour Party, into keeping the Tower Hamlets Labour branches in special measures."⁵⁹⁵

Britain's Islamic Republic was littered with references to "entryism" and "infiltration" – terms which no doubt would have struck a chord with more senior Labour Party officials who had witnessed the ideological wars that had riven the Party two decades previously when the so-called Militant Tendency tried to 'infiltrate' and impose its own agenda. Fitzpatrick, who began working for Labour in 1989, is unlikely to have been ignorant of these connotations when he appeared in the documentary and described the Islamic Forum of Europe as "an entryist organisation."⁵⁹⁶ Invoking the spectre of the Militant Tendency is likely to have elicited a visceral response among senior members, and perhaps convinced them that "special measures" were still necessary in Tower Hamlets.

With Fitzpatrick's help, Gilligan made the case that Tower Hamlets Labour Party had been infiltrated by the IFE, with key figures including Rahman owing their positions to IFE influence. Fitzpatrick tells Gilligan of unspecified cases in which:

...people were being signed up to be members [of the Labour Party] and then told [by the IFE] to turn up to meetings where candidates were being selected with a list of those who they should be voting for, and were never seen before and never seen afterwards."⁵⁹⁷

Fitzpatrick does not state whether these alleged attempts were successful, nor does he give any indication of whom these "people" were voting for. As such, he leaves open the possibility that any Muslim candidate that has stood under the Labour banner in recent years may have been selected due to IFE's influence.

As well as framing the issue in terms that would appeal to the Labour hierarchy directly, *Britain's Islamic Republic* also served to bring to the wider public a narrative of subversion, infiltration and takeover that had hitherto been confined to fringe websites and a handful of right-wing polemicists. Highlighting as a probable 'cause for concern' the fact that Council meetings now adjourn for prayer breaks, Gilligan's documentary exploited popular prejudice by suggesting that rising 'Islamism' within the Council was 'imposing' itself on non-Muslim councillors and even the public at large. It cites the example of a poorly-worded email sent out to all councillors during Ramadan asking them not to eat the sandwiches that had been laid out for Muslim councillors to break their fasts – an incident that was blown out of all proportion when the email was misinterpreted (perhaps deliberately) to allege that Muslim councillors were 'imposing Ramadan fasting' on the rest.

Britain's Islamic Republic played into existing narratives in the local and national media that accused the Council of imposing 'Islamic values' on the borough. The most bizarre example concerned the proposed replacement of the dilapidated arches at either end of Bricklane with two new structures that were described by several media sources as "hijab-shaped." Quite apart from the fact that comparing a 10-foot steel arch to a piece of cloth requires a certain leap of imagination, the arches – which were part of a £1.85 million 'cultural uplift' for the area that included improvements to the local synagogue – were not designed by the Council, but by an external contractor. Nonetheless, these innocuous developments were painted by

the media as “symbols of domination and repression” imposed by the Labour-led Council on the residents of the borough.⁵⁹⁸

Sadly, Jim Fitzpatrick as a local Labour MP did nothing to dispel such absurd notions. Indeed, his media forays in the lead-up to *Dispatches* serve to exacerbate the idea – however fanciful – that radical Muslim groups are in control of Tower Hamlets. In August 2008, he made national headlines by storming out of the wedding of a Labour supporter at the East London Mosque after discovering that it was gender segregated. It seems unlikely that an MP for an area that was once the heart of Britain’s Jewish community and now has a large Muslim population would have been unaware that this practice is common among various faiths. Be that as it may, Fitzpatrick refused point blank to return to the ceremony, even after his hosts kindly informed him that non-segregated seating was indeed available.

Seemingly determined to make his political point, Fitzpatrick ran straight to the press, blaming the IFE “for imposing stricter rules,”⁵⁹⁹ and went on to claim that “the stranglehold influence of the IFE is present more than ever before.”⁶⁰⁰ This was despite the fact that his hosts flatly denied any IFE involvement, with the groom stating: “Neither they, Mr Fitzpatrick, the Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia or the Pope has a right to tell me and my wife what to do.”⁶⁰¹

By suggesting that IFE had a “stranglehold” over the borough’s Muslim community, Fitzpatrick helped to create the impression – later solidified in *Britain’s Islamic Republic* – of an organised, homogenous fifth column that penetrated right to the heart of the Council and of Tower Hamlets Labour Party. Though it is impossible to say with any certainty to what degree this impression affected the Labour hierarchy, one thing is certain: Tower Hamlets remains in “special measures” – its very own state of emergency “that perpetuates the same fear, contempt, and loathing of the masses, the same legal void that enables governments to take extreme measures without sanction.”⁶⁰²

33. Laws are silent: The abuse of due process under “Special Measures”

Though the full extent of the powers granted under “special measures” is not entirely clear, in practice the Regional Party appears able to do anything it sees fit to control the political situation in Tower Hamlets. This culture of impunity has enabled a series of abuses that have had the effect of undermining Rahman’s leadership and allowing his New Labour opponents to re-assert their control over the Labour Group. The cases outlined below document what appears to be a concerted effort to weaken Rahman’s support base using methods and tactics that would not, under normal circumstances, have been tolerated by the Labour Party.

33.1 Amendment to Rahman’s proposal for Cabinet members (May 2008)

From the very outset of Rahman’s career as Leader of the Council, his New Labour opponents sought to undermine his position by interfering with the composition of his cabinet. In May 2008, Rahman put forward his proposal for a cabinet, as is the prerogative of a Leader Elect. In an unprecedented move, his opponents within the Labour Group brought a last-minute amendment to his proposal that aimed to remove several of his supporters from key cabinet positions, replacing them with councillors who had voted against his leadership bid.

Fortunately for Rahman, their amendment was voted down – albeit narrowly – by 14 votes to 13. Had it passed, his supporters would have been in a minority on the cabinet and his position as Leader would quickly have become untenable. As such, this constituted a *de facto* vote of no confidence in Rahman’s leadership. Coming just a week after he was elected, it is difficult to argue that such an assessment could be based on his performance.

The following year, Rahman sought legal advice to see if a repeat of this incident could be prevented, and was informed by Counsel that there is no provision in the Labour Party Constitution for such an amendment to be brought in the first place. This was later confirmed by the Regional Director, despite the fact that the Regional Party had rubber-stamped the process a year earlier.

33.2 Amendment to Rahman's motion on Gaza & Anti-Semitism (January 2009)

In January 2009 community tensions were running high as Israel's incursion into Gaza had sparked several incidents of anti-Semitism including racist graffiti. In response to this, Rahman lent his backing to a motion to the Labour Group condemning these incidents, while at the same time calling on the government to condemn Israel's disproportionate use of force in Operation Cast Lead. Presumably aware that if this motion were to go forward to the public forum of the Council it could increase Rahman's support among the borough's Muslim and Jewish communities alike, his political opponents attempted to attach a controversial amendment that would have served to nullify its political impact.

The amendment, which was proposed by Cllr Helal Abbas and seconded by Cllr Denise Jones, called on the government to 'look again' at banning the radical Islamic group Hizb-ut-Tahrir. Quite apart from the fact that this would normally have been considered a "wrecking amendment" as it bore no relation to the original content of the motion, it also appears to have been an attempt to use Rahman's status as a Muslim councillor against him to undermine his support in the community.

Although Hizb-ut-Tahrir is a fringe group even in Tower Hamlets, it seems doubtful that Rahman's New Labour opponents would not have realised that the issue of banning them is highly controversial in a borough with a large Muslim population, or that raising this issue placed Rahman in an impossible situation: if he proceeded in taking the motion forward with the amendment attached, he would risk alienating his largely Muslim core support; if he abandoned it, he would be left open to the accusation of failing to stand up to anti-Semitism in the borough – an accusation which could potentially destroy the career of a Muslim politician. Assuming an elementary level of knowledge about the community they serve, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that Rahman's opponents were engaged in what amounts to a cynical hijacking of the motion to prevent him from scoring a major political victory.⁶⁰³

Given that the amendment was unrelated to the original motion, under normal circumstances it should not even have been debated, let alone allowed to pass by the Chair of the Labour Group, who used her casting vote to ensure that it did. However, under "special measures" the Regional Party is free to pursue disciplinary matters at its own discretion, and it appears that no punitive action was taken on this occasion.

33.3 Removal of Rahman's supporters at the selection process for the 2010 local elections (August 2009 - February 2010)

Attempts to undermine Rahman were not confined to personal attacks on his leadership; they also affected his support base within the Labour Group. In the lead-up to the 2010 local elections, Rahman's opponents appear to have manipulated the selection process to choose Labour candidates, seemingly with the aim of replacing sitting councillors who supported Rahman with new faces that opposed him.

In August 2009, Mohammed Shahid Ali, Salim Ullah, Shafiqul Haque and Fazlul Haque were the only sitting councillors to be de-selected at the first stage of the process to choose

candidates for the 2010 local elections. The reasons given for their removal were spurious, and do not appear to correspond either to their performance as councillors or to the Labour Party's previous support for them. The only factor that they all had in common – other than being Bangladeshi Muslims – was their support for Rahman.

For example, Salim Ullah was accused of being 'unable to articulate his role on the Council' and of 'poor performance in representing his ward.' This was despite the fact that Ullah – who was beaten up by the National Front while distributing Labour Party leaflets in the 1980s – had won local elections for the Party in 1998, 2002 and 2006, as well as being Civic Mayor of the borough in 2001-2. Mohammad Shahid Ali was dismissed on similar grounds, in spite of the fact that he was the only councillor to win a seat for Labour in the Respect stronghold of Shadwell in 2006.⁶⁰⁴

The treatment of Fazlul Haque was similarly incongruous. Despite having satisfied the Regional Party only 14 months previously that he met the criteria to be selected as a candidate for Weavers Ward, the Party appears to have decided suddenly that he was no longer eligible, even though the selection criteria for candidates had not changed in the intervening period, and nor had Haque's circumstances.

These seemingly arbitrary deselections are a prime example of the sweeping powers granted to the Regional Party under "special measures." Under normal circumstances, the decision to deselect sitting councillors would have been taken through a ballot of local party members, rather than imposed from above by the Regional Office. However, "special measures" appear to grant the Regional Party absolute discretion to remove candidates without the checks and balances of a democratic vote. This means that personal gripes and vendettas can come to play a more important role than performance or commitment to the Party.

33.4 Removal of Cllr. Fazlul Haque (August-October 2009)

As stated above, Rahman was not the only Muslim Bangladeshi to suffer in the climate of impunity engendered by "special measures." In a move outrageous even by the warped standards these measures seem to entail, Cllr. Fazlul Haque found himself facing a conflation of his selection interview and a disciplinary hearing that appears to have been sparked by a personal feud. His subsequent deselection marks the end of a political career that had lasted less than two years.

In July 2009, Cllr. Haque had a disagreement with the Chief Whip after she violated Labour Party rules and unilaterally removed him from his appointed position on the Council's influential HR committee.⁶⁰⁵ Cllr. Haque lodged an official complaint with the Labour Party, which elicited an angry response from the Chief Whip, and resulted in a deeply unpleasant scene in which she proceeded to harangue him in front of his fellow councillors and members of the public.

However, Haque's complaint was ignored and instead he was summoned to meet with the Chief Whip and the Regional Director to discuss *his* behaviour, not hers. As he was given only 24 hours notice for the meeting, it is understandable that he was unable to attend. Although a new date was agreed upon, Cllr. Haque received an email from the Regional Director several days beforehand stating that the latter was 'convinced' that Haque had no intention of meeting him and that the matter would be dealt with at his selection hearing.

In itself, the use of a selection interview to decide a disciplinary matter is a glaring abuse of the principles of natural justice. It is made even worse by the fact Cllr. Haque had an outstanding disciplinary complaint against the Chief Whip for removing him from the HR

committee in the first place. Although the Labour Party's disciplinary procedures are normally conducted in strict confidence, Haque was ordered to produce a written apology to the Chief Whip and the Regional Director, and circulate this to the entire Labour Group, or else face deselection. Despite complying with this highly irregular request, Cllr. Haque was deselected in October 2009.

33.5 “No” for a Directly Elected Mayor of Tower Hamlets (Oct-Dec 2009)

Fed up with the shadowy back-room dealings and internecine warfare that had decided the political direction of their borough for decades, in October 2009 20,000 Tower Hamlets residents signed a petition calling for a referendum on a Directly Elected Mayor.⁶⁰⁶ The appointment of a Mayor to oversee the politics of the borough promised to impose a level of transparency and accountability on the Labour Party that was absent under “special measures.”

Aware that this would leave the Labour Party open to scrutiny and a public vote – and also, perhaps, that Rahman might be a strong candidate for such a position – Cllrs. Joshua Peck and Helal Abbas brought an emergency motion to the Labour Group calling on it to campaign for a “No” vote in the referendum. They were supported by the Regional Director, who appeared unannounced at the meeting and gave a “strong steer” that councillors should vote in line with the motion. Although this appears to have stopped short of actually telling councillors how to vote, the fact that under “special measures” the Regional Party enjoys sole responsibility for selecting candidates would undoubtedly have lent a certain weight to his suggestions, as would the fact that the four sitting councillors mentioned above had recently been deselected.⁶⁰⁷

In November 2009 when the Group met again to decide on a timetable for the Mayoral referendum, the Regional Director again intervened in councillors' deliberations, ensuring that they voted in favour of the referendum being held in May 2010, to coincide with the local elections in the borough. This appears to have been based on the calculation – which later proved inaccurate – that the call for a Mayor was a ‘minority view’ and that a higher turnout engendered by the local elections on the same day would be more likely to return a “No” vote.

Quite apart from the fact that interventions of this sort are arguably inappropriate given that the Regional Office has the power to determine which councillors would be allowed to stand again for the Party and which would not; urging councillors to vote “No” goes against Labour's national policy, which has supported Directly Elected Mayors since 2001. When pressed to explain why the Regional Office supported a “No” vote, the Regional Director stated simply that Tower Hamlets was a “special case,” and appeared unwilling to elaborate further.

Moreover, in the effort to secure its preferred outcome regarding the timetable for the referendum, the Regional Party overrode the Council's most basic requirement to provide good governance, ignoring the views of its legal chief who stated that “in the spirit of the 2007 Act and to promote effective governance...it would be beneficial for the referendum to be held in time for the final new executive arrangements to apply from May 2010 [i.e. so that it would not coincide with local elections].” In these cases, therefore, the Regional Party not only interfered in the internal processes of the Labour Group, undermining its political independence, it also went against Labour's national policy and the independent legal advice of the civil service.

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The cases outlined above show how the Regional Labour Party has used the powers granted to it under “special measures” to suspend the Party’s internal democratic processes and standing orders; to override Group policy and the Labour Party constitution...

33.6 Exclusion of Rahman from the Mayoral short listing process (Jun-Jul 2010)

Despite the Regional Party's best efforts to prevent it, the Mayoral referendum returned an overwhelming "Yes" vote, with around 2/3 of the electorate voting in favour. The process was soon underway to find Labour's candidate for the post of Directly Elected Mayor. As the person who had led Labour to its biggest gains on the Council since 1994, Rahman was a natural choice for the shortlist. However, every effort was made to exclude Rahman from the process entirely. The case outlined below is arguably the most glaring example of how the Regional Party used the powers granted to it under "special measures" in the attempt to deny Rahman even the slightest chance of running for the post.

Ordinarily, the short listing process for such a position would have been decided by a series of votes from Labour Party members. However, under "special measures," a panel of 3-5 senior Labour Party officials assumed control of the selections, replacing direct democracy with a private interview and eliminating the right of appeal. One stipulation made by the panel was that it would not admit into its deliberations any information that had not been put to applicants in interview.

Despite this, it emerged a short while after Rahman had been excluded from the shortlist that the Regional Director had done precisely this, by introducing into the panel's private deliberations the allegations crystallised in Britain's Islamic Republic. Citing this, the lack of an appeal process and various other violations, Rahman and at least one other applicant mounted a legal challenge. As a result, the Labour Party agreed to a re-run of the short listing process – an implicit admission that the initial process had been flawed.

The re-run resulted in Michael Keith, Cllr. Helal Abbas and the relatively unknown Rosna Murtoza being added to the list, while Cllr. Sirajul Islam was removed. Given that the revised shortlist included a candidate who had never before held elected office and Michael Keith, who had thrice failed to be elected in the borough, it is difficult to see how the panel could have excluded Rahman on the basis of performance alone. Indeed, the panel was unwilling to divulge their reasons for this decision, despite repeated requests from Rahman for a written explanation. Equally, it is hard to see how Cllr. Sirajul Islam, who had made the first shortlist, could suddenly be considered unworthy for the second, which contained at least one applicant whose achievements for Labour were markedly inferior to his own.

Rahman and Islam used their newly granted right of appeal to contest this decision, citing further inconsistencies in the short listing process. Both were later informed that they were now included on the shortlist in a letter dated 23rd July 2010, which confirmed: "this decision is final." However, the General Secretary of the Labour Party appears then to have intervened to invalidate this decision, claiming the authority to overrule the appeals panel and re-establish the second shortlist that had excluded Rahman and Islam.

Having lost faith in the Labour Party's ability to stick to the rules it had drawn up only a few days previously, Rahman took the matter to the High Court. Just one hour before the case was due to be heard, the Party capitulated, placing Rahman on the shortlist and even offering to pay legal costs. There can be no clearer indication than Labour's unwillingness to defend its actions before a judge that they were at the very least outside the Party's processes and possibly outside the law of the land.

The cases outlined above show how the Regional Labour Party has used the powers granted to it under "special measures" to suspend the Party's internal democratic processes and standing orders; to override Group policy and the Labour Party constitution; to intervene arbitrarily in the selection of candidates and to interfere with short listing processes and

disciplinary proceedings with the effect of altering the political balance of the Group. The Regional Party has utilised its quasi-dictatorial powers to impinge not just on the political independence of the Labour group, but also the integrity of the borough's civil service. The authors of this report feel that regardless of whether its wider assertions are held to be accurate, there is a profound need to address what is undoubtedly a corruption of the democratic process in Tower Hamlets.

34. Making Enemies: The Invocation of the 'Islamist' Paradigm as a Tool of Factional Politics in Tower Hamlets

So far this report has demonstrated how the 'Islamist' paradigm has been used to make the case for a perpetual 'state of emergency' in Tower Hamlets Labour Party, as well as illustrating just some of the abuses that have taken place in this constitutional void. This section examines more closely how this paradigm has come to be the foremost tool by which Rahman's New Labour opponents engage in the factional politics that has come to define Labour's control of the borough. With reference to four key events in the period 2008-2010 – the amendment brought to Rahman's cabinet proposal; the appointment of a new CEO for Tower Hamlets Council; the deselection of four sitting councillors before the 2010 local elections; and the attempt to prevent Rahman from making the Mayoral shortlist – it shows how the 'Islamist' paradigm has been invoked to lend weight to criticism of Rahman and his supporters and justify attempts to undermine him from within his own party.

Just days after Rahman put forward his cabinet proposal to the Labour Group (see section 2.1.1), an article by Ted Jeory appeared in the *East London Advertiser* quoting "sources" who had expressed "concern that Cllr Rahman's [cabinet] list was being influenced by the Islamic Forum of Europe, an organisation based at the East London Mosque he has long had links with."⁶⁰⁸ Given that the list was a confidential Labour Party document, this information could only have come via one of his fellow councillors.⁶⁰⁹

Not only were such allegations entirely unsubstantiated; they appeared at a critical juncture at the start of Rahman's leadership, coinciding directly with his opponents' seemingly inexplicable attempts to interfere with the composition of his cabinet.⁶¹⁰ Two possible conclusions emerge from this: either Rahman's fellow councillors were sufficiently convinced by the allegations to surmise that interfering with his cabinet composition was necessary in order to guard against a supposed 'Islamist' influence, or the allegations were part of a calculated attempt by his fellow councillors to legitimise their unconstitutional efforts to pack out his cabinet with his political opponents.

In either case, Rahman suffered prejudice in the literal sense of the word, in that he had been judged before he had acted, on the basis of suspected collusion with an allegedly radical Muslim group. No evidence is provided to support these grave assertions, except an oblique reference to a shared place of worship – the East London Mosque. Perhaps more worryingly, this case demonstrates that notions of an 'Islamist' infiltration were being touted by Rahman's opponents before his leadership had even begun. Such allegations may also help to explain why the Regional Party looked the other way as Rahman's opponents openly flouted the Party rules and constitution in a bid to undermine his support base.

The next major blow came in May 2009, when Rahman moved to appoint a new Chief Executive to the Council. Given that the Council had seen four Chief Executives in six years, this was by no means extraordinary in the context of the borough. The former CEO Martin Smith had been appointed by Rahman's predecessor and staunch political opponent Denise



Jones, and as the only Council employee with the capacity to stall the implementation of Rahman's policy agenda, his departure meant that the last vestiges of influence held by his opponents had been removed.

Sure enough, an article relying heavily on information from "Labour insiders" appeared in the Express just a few days after Rahman had asked Smith to "consider his future."⁶¹¹ In what can only be described as a masterpiece of dog-whistle journalism, the article appears to imply that Rahman's decision was made in collusion with the Imam of the Grand Mosque in Mecca and an IFE official on the basis that Smith was interfering in the plans of the Saudi-funded East London Mosque to "buy the Council's share in its freehold."⁶¹²

Quite apart from the faintly ridiculous notion that the Imam of Mecca might intervene in a local government planning issue, the article appears to insinuate that Rahman's decisions as Leader are based not on professional concerns or the interests of the borough, but on supposed influence from marginal interest groups whose links with the Council are established again solely on basis of the faith of its Leader.⁶¹³ Moreover, these assertions were shoehorned into an article on a new government anti-terror strategy, associating Rahman – albeit obliquely – with violent extremism.

The media storm that surrounded Smith's departure served not only to bolster criticism of Rahman's decisions, but also, seemingly, to pre-empt situations and limit his room for manoeuvre. After Rahman appointed Dr Kevan Collins as the new interim CEO, an anonymous article appeared in *Private Eye* implying that this move would not be permanent, as Collins is "gay, and therefore not acceptable to the East London Mosque – which is where the real power lies in 'multi-cultural' Tower Hamlets. A rigorous and fair selection process will now take place...leading to the appointment of a Muslim Bengali."⁶¹⁴ A rigorous and fair selection process did indeed take place, leading to Dr Collins' permanent appointment as Chief Executive.

Though Rahman had backed Collins from the start, these baseless assertions served to place on him a level of scrutiny that made the appointment of any ethnic minority candidate politically impossible. Once again, we are confronted with the notion that councillors' religious sensibilities might take precedence over their professional duty to appoint the best person for the job, and provided no more evidence than their belonging to a particular religious group and worshipping at a particular mosque.

In the same article, as well as several others that appeared around this time, concerns were expressed at the appointment to Council committees of Cllrs. Mohammed Shahid Ali, Salim Ullah, Shafiqul Haque and Fazlul Haque, all of whom were later deselected by the Regional Party on spurious grounds (see section 1.4.3).

The articles, which contained leaked information by Labour Party members,⁶¹⁵ referred to the Bangladeshi councillors by name in the context of the same allegation that "the real power...in multi-cultural Tower Hamlets lies with the East London Mosque."⁶¹⁶ In addition to the various allegations of cronyism and racial bias levelled at Rahman personally with regard to the appointment of these councillors, the author also states that "the East London Mosque...now likes to approve key appointments on the Council."⁶¹⁷ The argument implicit in the articles is that these councillors owe their positions not to their credentials or their achievements for the Labour Party, but to the alleged influence exerted over the Council by the East London Mosque.

The timing of these articles in the lead-up to the selection process for the 2010 local elections, along with the fact that Labour Party members contributed information toward

them appears to indicate that they form part of an attempt by Rahman's opponents to justify the dismissal of four Bangladeshi Muslim councillors whose contribution to the Labour Party had, up to that point, been virtually irreproachable. One of the articles in particular appears to confirm this view:

Meanwhile the clock is ticking for Lutfur's regime, with the local Party's membership department in 'special measures' and the process for selecting candidates taken over by the Regional Party, which has woken up to the influence of the East London Mosque and Saudi-backed Islamic Forum of Europe on the Council leadership.⁶¹⁸

The confidence with which the author assigns motive and rationale to the Regional Labour Party alongside the fact that councillors Mohammed Shahid Ali, Salim Ullah and Fazlul Haque were subsequently de-selected, suggests either that those responsible for the selection process were influenced by the allegations made in the article, or that they were complicit in its writing.

Indeed, East End reporter Ted Jeory has indicated in his private blog that the manipulation of the selection process is part of a wider strategy by Rahman's opponents to ensure their continued dominance of the Tower Hamlets Labour Group:

*Helal Abbas...has spent the past two years plotting the downfall of his old friend and now sworn enemy, Lutfur Rahman. In this quest, he allied with...Michael Keith and his band of supporters such as Denise Jones and, more silently, Josh Peck. Together, they accused Rahman of being too much under the influence of the Islamic Forum of Europe (IFE)...This meant Abbas and co effectively controlled the selection process for candidates. And so it has come to pass that his supporters are now a majority in the new group.*⁶¹⁹

What emerges from these articles above all is a strong sense that certain Labour Party members are engaged in an attempt to influence the selection process through the tactical use of the 'Islamist' paradigm to condemn Muslim councillors and thereby legitimise their dismissal. These narratives may explain in part why the Regional Party not only overlooked the numerous abuses taking place under "special measures," but also intervened directly to prevent certain Muslim councillors from achieving the political recognition that their achievements might otherwise have merited.

Throughout Rahman's career as Leader of the Council there were repeated attempts to smear him by linking his status and success to the alleged "stranglehold" of Muslim organisations on the politics of the borough. These attempts did not stop when in May 2010 he was unable to contest a leadership challenge from Helal Abbas after the carefully engineered selection process had left him without the necessary number of supporters to do so. His application to be Labour's candidate for Directly Elected Mayor appeared similarly doomed after it emerged that the unsubstantiated allegations made against him in Britain's Islamic Republic had been introduced into the short listing panel's private deliberations. While it is impossible to know to what degree these influenced the panel's decision-making process, the fact that the Labour Party later acceded to Rahman's appeal – which was undertaken on grounds that included the introduction of this material – is a strong suggestion that the allegations contained in the Dispatches documentary had played a pivotal role.

During the series of abuses that took place over the Mayoral selection, Gilligan posted articles with such provocative and triumphalist headlines as "Fundamentalist councillor stuffed again," even as the principles of his cherished democracy were being traduced by an unaccountable group of Labour Party hierarchs who appear to have used the argument he brought together to inform panel decisions that they were unwilling to defend before a judge.

35. It Shouldn't Happen to a Muslim...But it Does

Dispatches has fallen a long way since Peter Osborne commemorated the 7/7 bombings in a documentary investigating the rise in racism and Islamophobia in Britain. *It Shouldn't Happen to a Muslim* was filmed in May 2008, just as Rahman was starting out as Leader of Tower Hamlets Council. As his subsequent career highlights, the trends Osborne identifies are more than just abstractions, they have become a real, pervasive and potent force in British politics, drawing a veil between British citizens and the exercise of their democratic rights simply on the basis of faith.

It has been argued that anti-Muslim sentiment cannot be equated to racism, that race is intrinsic whereas Muslims are free to repudiate their faith at any time. Yet Rahman's case has made clear that Islamophobia can share many of the same characteristics as racial prejudice. While fears of a "Bangladeshi takeover" in Tower Hamlets have given way to the narrative "Islamist Infiltration," the language in which these fears are expressed and the manner in which they are brought to bear on individuals, groups and institutions has changed very little. The assumption that members of a particular group, whether it be a race or a religion, are bound by the perceived characteristics of that group; that they will act always and only in that group's interest; that they are incapable of seeing, let alone advancing the interests of the nation as a whole, is still present. Nearly half a century after the first Race Relations Act was passed in parliament, we still treat our minority communities as though their interests are alien and incompatible with our own.

This report has shown how these assumptions have been utilised by a political faction in Tower Hamlets to advance its own ends. Yet this has been achieved at the expense of community cohesion, not just in Tower Hamlets, but Britain as a whole. Having helped to create a media monster, neither members of the Labour Group nor Andrew Gilligan have been able to control the forces they unleashed. A video obtained by the *Guardian* shows members of the English Defence League justifying their decision to march on Tower Hamlets on the basis that in "Tower Hamlets you got the East London Mosque...the IFE...that's basically the centre for fucking – the headquarters for Islam."⁶²⁰ Despite the fact that his argument has attracted such unsavoury disciples, Gilligan continues to use his Daily Telegraph blog to pursue Rahman, the IFE and an ever-widening list of Muslims he claims are "linked."

On the other side of the religious divide, Gilligan's documentary and the testimony of high-ranking politicians like Jim Fitzpatrick have served strengthen the impression among many Muslims – created by the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan as well as draconian anti-terrorism legislation introduced under the New Labour government – that British politics is intrinsically Islamophobic, and that the "integration agenda of the British government is less about addressing terrorism and more about Muslims giving up their Islamic values."⁶²¹

Gilligan has repeatedly asserted that anyone who is concerned for the state of British democracy needs to pay closer attention to events in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. He could not be more right in this assertion, nor could he be more wrong in the reasons he draws our attention there. Few democracies have ever been subverted by the tyranny of a deprived and marginalised minority, but many have been eaten alive by the cancer of a fearful majority led by cynical politicians. That is arguably the greatest lesson the 20th Century has to teach us.

It is possible, though unlikely, that a planned 'Islamist' takeover of the UK is currently underway. It is more possible and more likely that the fear of such a takeover is leading us to

destroy for ourselves the open society that the likes of Gilligan are urging us to protect. As US commentator Keith Olbermann has said of the so-called “Ground Zero Mosque” controversy: “There have always been those who would happily sacrifice our freedoms, our principles, to ward off the latest unprecedented threat, the latest unbeatable outsider. Once again...we are being told to sell our birthright to feed the maw of xenophobia and vengeance and mob rule.”⁶²²

36. Postscript

On 4th September 2010, Lutfur Rahman won a convincing victory in the ballot to be Labour’s candidate for the mayoralty with 433 votes. John Biggs second with 251 votes and Helal Abbas third with 157 votes. The ballot saw an unprecedented level of security. Each member was asked to provide photographic ID and membership lists were carefully vetted by the Labour Regional office. Provision was also made for a female party official to check the identity of Muslim women wearing the full veil.

At the time, there was no suggestion of foul play, with the *East London Advertiser* reporting that only “20 party members had to be turned away because they had no proof of identity, though 10 returned later with the right documents to prove who they were.” The runner up, John Biggs, and Jim Fitzpatrick were both quick to congratulate Rahman and to support him as Labour’s candidate⁶²⁴ and Labour Councillors from all factions quickly rallied behind him. No doubts were expressed about the validity of the election, which Rahman had won by a convincing margin and, senior Labour Party figures expressed confidence that the vote had been a fair and open one.

There were some, however, who had not conceded defeat. Shortly after Rahman’s victory, a dossier compiled by Helal Abbas, was submitted to Labour’s ruling NEC. Chief among the accusations contained in the dossier was the bizarre assertion that Rahman had been “in my opinion brainwashed by fundamentalists.” Also included were supposed instances of violence and intimidation as well as allegations many of those who had voted in Labour’s ballot were not, in fact, members or had been signed up fraudulently.⁶²⁵ Predictably, the allegations made by Gilligan also featured in Abbas’ dossier.

Abbas’ allegations stood in stark contrast to the endorsement of the ballot and its results by senior Labour officials and local party members alike. They are also strange in the context of “special measures” as these had made responsibility for vetting new members and checking their Labour credentials a matter for the regional party, not of local party members like Rahman.

Christine Shawcroft, a long-standing NEC member recounts subsequent events in her official Labour blog:

*The Labour Party NEC met on Tuesday, 21st September. The first substantive item was an emergency item on Labour’s candidate for Tower Hamlets Mayor. A number of complaints about Cllr Lutfur Rahman’s success were tabled. Cllr Lutfur Rahman had not been given notice of these complaints, nor chance to answer them. The NEC decided that the complaints should be investigated, that Cllr Lutfur Rahman should be suspended as a candidate during this investigation, and that as nominations close on Friday, 24th September and the investigation would not be concluded by that time, they would select a new candidate.*⁶²⁶

Despite the obvious conflict of interest and the fact that he had come third in the selection process, the NEC voted to install Helal Abbas as the candidate.⁶²⁷ Shawcroft also notes that a key proponent of Rahman’s exclusion was Ray Collins, General Secretary of the Party:

the same man who was responsible for unilaterally rescinding Rahman's inclusion on the shortlist of candidates before a court order forced him to backtrack.⁶²⁸

In the face of this unprecedented disregard for the outcome of an election that its own officials endorsed, Rahman decided to leave the Labour Party and stand as an independent, a move that has split the party locally and nationally. Eight Labour councillors who appeared with him at a rally have been suspended and the Labour Peer Lord Nazir was disciplined for the same offence. On Monday 18th October, Ken Livingstone, Labour's candidate for Mayor of London and no stranger to the machinations of the NEC was seen supporting Rahman's campaign. It remains to be seen if the same standard of discipline will be applied to one of Labour's big beasts as was applied to less well known members.

On 21st October 2010, Lutfur Rahman was elected independent Mayor of Tower Hamlets with just under 23,000 of 44,000 votes cast. Labour's candidate, Helal Abbas was well beaten with only 11,000. Rahman's victory gives him a clear mandate, but his task will be a difficult one. It remains to be seen whether Rahman is up to the challenge, but it is clear that despite the best attempts of the New Labour faction to maintain their decade-long ascendancy, the balance of power in the borough has irrevocably shifted and the back-room politics that was their hallmark has been exposed as divisive and undemocratic.

585 The author has worked extensively in Tower Hamlets politics and we have respected his wish to remain anonymous.

586 Engage review <http://www.iengage.org.uk/component/content/article/780-review-of-gilligans-islamicpublic-c4-documentary-about-the-ife>

587 A series of articles by Gilligan alleging corruption in Ken Livingstone's London Mayoral administration were also pivotal in the latter's defeat, though Fitzpatrick, who is currently campaign manager for Oona King, Livingstone's only rival for Labour's candidacy to take on Boris Johnson in 2012, is unlikely to hold this against Gilligan.

588 Independent, 1994. Race-row Lib Dems Fight Expulsion: Appeal Verdicts are Unlikely to Heal Rift between Opposition Parties in the Run-up to May Local Government Elections. The Independent, 10 January. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/racerow-lib-dems-fight-expulsion-appeal-verdicts-are-unlikely-to-heal-rift-between-opposition-parties-in-the-runup-to-may-local-government-elections-patriciawynn-davies-reports-1405864.html> –accessed 31.8.10

589 Rich Mix Website. Online at: <http://www.richmix.org.uk/about.htm> –accessed 31.8.10.

590 'Rich Mix Arts Centre Wins Reprieve with £2.5m Cash Boost from Tower Hamlets', East London Lines, 3 East London Lines, 2010. August. <http://www.eastlondon-lines.co.uk/2010/08/rich-mix-arts-centre-gets-500000-bail-out/> –accessed 31.8.10.

591 Although opposition to the Iraq war undoubtedly played a pivotal role in Galloway's victory, the local election victories for Respect the following year were as much to do with Labour's failures on the ground as with its foreign adventures.

592 Email circulated to National Executive Committee members in July 2010, by the Chair of the Tower Hamlets Labour Party.

593 Agamben, Giorgio, 2005. State of Exception, trans. K. Attell. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p.

184

594 Email circulated to Labour's National Executive Committee, July 2010.

595 Jeory, Ted, 2010. Preparing for the Interregnum. Trial By Jeory. 10 May.

<http://trialbyjeory.wordpress.com/2010/05/> –accessed 31.8.10

596 Dispatches, 2010. Britain's Islamic Republic, Dispatches, Channel 4. 1 March.

597 Ibid.

- 598 London Evening Standard, 2010. Tracey Emin Leads Protest at 'Hijab Gates' for Brick Lane', London Evening Standard, 16 February. <http://www.thisislondon.co.uk/standard/article-23806415-tracey-emin-leadsprotest-at-hijab-gates-plan-for-brick-lane.do> –accessed 31.8.10
- 599 Daily Telegraph, 2009. Jim Fitzpatrick Condemned for 'Hijacking' Muslim Wedding by Bridegroom The Telegraph. 14 August. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstopics/religion/6029146/Jim-Fitzpatrickcondemned-for-hijacking-Muslim-wedding-by-bridegroom.html> –accessed 31.8.10.
- 600 Politics.co.uk, 2009. Jim Fitzpatrick walks out of Muslim wedding. <http://www.politics.co.uk/news/equality/jim-fitzpatrick-walks-out-of-muslim-wedding-51318828.htm> –accessed 31.8.10.
- 601 Ibid.
- 602 Rajagopal, Balakrishnan, 2003. *International Law from Below: Development, Social Movements and Third World Resistance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p.183.
- 603 The only other explanation for the amendment, which did not appear to relate in any way to the original motion, is that it was an attempt to link sporadic anti-Semitism in the borough to a specific Muslim group, without any evidence whatsoever that would implicate that group in the incidents in question.
- 604 Former Council Leader Michael Keith, on the other hand, was re-selected as a candidate, despite having lost his seat to Respect in Shadwell that same year. He went on to lose again in Wapping, marking the third time in four years that the borough's electorate had rejected him.
- 605 The HR committee is responsible for overseeing appointments and disciplinary processes within the Council. Given the concerns expressed in Private Eye no.1238 (outlined in section 3 of this report), it is possible that Haque's initial removal was sparked by the impulse to retain control of this committee, though it quickly escalated into personal rancour.
- 606 Although around 8000 of these signatures were disqualified on various technical grounds, 11,000 were deemed valid after rigorous checks by an independent team of civil servants – still well above the required minimum of 8000.
- 607 It is interesting to note that of these four, the three who refused to vote as "steered" later had their deselections confirmed, whereas the one who followed the advice of the Regional Director was reinstated as a councillor within weeks of this meeting.
- 608 East London Advertiser, 2010. 13 May 2010. <http://www.eastlondonadvertiser.co.uk/content/towerhamlets/advertiser/news/story.aspx?brand=ELAOnline&category=news&tBrand=northlondon24&Category=newsela&itemid=WeED13%20May%202008%2015%3A09%3A17%3A380>
- 609 This assumes, of course, that whoever had expressed "concern" had actually seen the list.
- 610 As mentioned in section 1.4.1, it is difficult to argue that this move – which amounts to a vote of no confidence – was based on his abilities as Leader, given that he had yet to exercise any executive power in this role.
- 611 Indeed, given that the article appeared over a week before the official announcement of Smith's departure, this information could only have been obtained from someone at the heart of the Council's decision-making process.
- 612 The Express, 2009. *Government Plans New Anti-Terror Strategies*. 14 June 2009. <http://www.express.co.uk/posts/view/107304/Government-plans-new-counter-terrorism-strategies>
- 613 The article refers to a "privately-funded delegation to Saudi Arabia" and states that Rahman along with three other Muslim councillors had gone to be "blessed" by the "controversial Imam." In actual fact, the councillors went to Saudi Arabia on Umrah – a religious pilgrimage similar to Hajj.
- 614 Private Eye, 2009. A Lutfur Your Money. Private Eye, no. 1238 (12-25 June 2009), p.13.
- 615 The articles quote verbatim a statement made by Rahman in a Labour Party meeting – a meeting to which only his fellow Labour Party members would have had access, indicating that the latter contributed directly to these articles.
- 616 Ibid, p.13
- 617 Private Eye, 2009. Salim Chance. Private Eye no. 1239 (26 June-9 July 2009), p.13
- 618 Private Eye, 2009. Those Phobias in Full Private Eye no.1240 (10-23 July 2009), p.13
- 619 Jeory, Ted. 2010. *Preparing for the Interregnum Trial By Jeory* 10 May. <http://trialbyjeory.wordpress.com/2010/05/> –accessed 7.9.10.
- 620 Guardian, 2010. *English Defence League: Inside the Violent World of Britain's Far Right*. Guardian 28 May. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2010/may/28/english-defence-league-guardian-investigation> –accessed 31.8.10.
- 621 IslamOnline, 2009. *Are UK Politicians Threatening Muslims' Integration?* IslamOnline, 27 August. http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?c=Article_C&cid=1251021216468&pagename=Zone-English-Euro_Muslims%2FEMELayout –accessed 31.8.10.
- 622 Olbermann, Keith, 2010. *There is No 'Ground Zero Mosque' Countdown*, 16 August. http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/38730223/ns/msnbc_tv-countdown_with_keith_olbermann/ –accessed 31.8.10.
- 623 http://www.eastlondonadvertiser.co.uk/news/rahman_was_neck_and_neck_for_labour_mayor_candidate_until_5th_round_1_624179 –accessed 20.10.10
- 624 http://www.eastlondonadvertiser.co.uk:80/news/city_hall_chief_backs_labour_mayor_candidate_rahman_1_625264 –accessed 20.10.10.
- 625 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/davehillblog/2010/oct/01/tower-hamlets-mayoral-candidate-helal-abbasallegations-against-opponent> –accessed 20.10.10
- 626 <http://www.christineshawcroft.co.uk/nec> –accessed 20.10.10.
- 627 http://www.labourbriefing.org.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=44&Itemid=82 –accessed 20.10.10.
- 628 <http://www.christineshawcroft.co.uk/nec> –accessed 20.10.10.

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Regrettably this is part and parcel of a divide and rule strategy that has characterised government engagement with Muslim communities since 9/11. A divide and rule strategy has been a conceptual cornerstone of the war on terror from inception.

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Part Six

Responses and Recommendations

37. Partnership or exclusion?

Our research reveals clear evidence of institutional discrimination in respect of attempts by Muslim organisations to organise an effective response to Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hate crime. In a policy initiated in 2006 by Ruth Kelly and later developed by Hazel Blears at the Department for Communities and Local Government the previous government sought to delegitimise politically active Muslim organisations with the ability and commitment necessary to lead and mobilise a campaign to tackle Islamophobia and defend Muslim communities against anti-Muslim hate crimes. The motivation for such counter-productive and discriminatory government policy is premised on the negative Policy Exchange analysis of political Islam we have already described. Most notably, in 2009 Hazel Blears severed links with the Muslim Council of Britain at the very time it was raising awareness about the problems of Islamophobia and violence against Muslims.⁶²⁹

More recently members of the present Cabinet have signalled a willingness to continue a boycott of the MCB and other Muslim organisations campaigning against Islamophobia. Significantly, Muslim organisations that have won favour with the present and previous government have instead shown either a distinct disinterest in the problems associated with Islamophobia or alternatively adopted a response to Islamophobia pioneered by Tony Blair and currently being championed by the Blair Faith Foundation one of the charities the former Prime Minister set up on retirement from government and party politics.

Essentially this is an approach that aims to reassure the general public that the government is supporting Muslims who are prepared to challenge the ‘radicalism’ and ‘fundamentalism’ of established Muslim organisations as well as the extremism of fringe groups like Al Muhajiroun. This approach remains congenial to Blair because it entailed partnership with Muslims who supported or remained silent about the war on terror.

To illustrate, Maajid Nawaz and Ed Husain, co-founders of the government funded ‘counter-extremist’ Quilliam Foundation soon became the government’s main standard bearers in the media whenever an incident occurred that was likely to inflame anti-Muslim sentiment. Certainly, as we have seen, media and public outrage reached fever pitch in March 2009 when a handful of Al Muhajiroun activists staged a noisy demonstration against British soldiers marching through Luton after a tour of duty. Typically, Maajid Nawaz was called upon to reassure readers of *The Sun* newspaper that Muslim extremists were being tackled by him and ‘moderate’ Muslims like him. Interviewed by *The Sun*’s chief features writer Oliver Hardy, Maajid explained that he used to love “Liverpool FC, badminton and chart music” before he became a member of the radical group Hizb ut-Tahrir, which, he explained, shared “the same ideas as al-Qaeda but uses different methods to achieve its goals.”⁶³⁰

It is hardly a co-incidence that Nawaz shares Blair’s flawed neo-conservative analysis of the root cause of 9/11, 7/7 and the al-Qaeda terrorist threat to the UK. Apart from implausibly if

necessarily inflating the significance of fringe extremist groups like Hizb ut Tahrir, Nawaz also impugns the integrity of the very Muslim organisations who have stood up to all kinds of extremists – including Hizb ut Tahrir and Al Muhajiroun – during the last two decades. Thus, we have interviewed numerous members of mainstream Muslim organisations who were heckled and castigated by Nawaz and Husain when the two counter-extremists were members of Hizb ut Tahrir. Then, as loyal members of Hizb ut Tahrir Nawaz and Husain would object energetically to Muslim organisations that engaged directly in democratic politics in the UK. Today they object equally forcefully to the same Muslim organisations and individuals being granted legitimacy by the political establishment.⁶³¹

For interviewees who have known Nawaz and Husain since they were students at Newham College in the early 1990s they can at least observe a psychological consistency in the pair's attachment to extremist and dogmatic ideologies notwithstanding a shift from one end of a political continuum so as to adopt and propound neo-conservative ideology at the opposite end. From both opposite perspectives – Hizb ut Tahrir and Quilliam Foundation – Nawaz and Husain have sought to undermine the mainstream Muslim organisations that have been at the heart of countering racist and anti-Muslim violence in London's East End. One veteran of pioneering multi-cultural anti-racist, anti-National Front resistance in Tower Hamlets in the early 1990s recalls how Nawaz and Husain would refuse to take part because they refused to work in partnership with non-Muslims.⁶³²

In contrast our interviewee is representative of members of mainstream Muslim organisations who felt sufficiently secure in their Islamic faith that they never baulked at the idea of working with non Muslims partners for the common good. So secure, indeed, that unlike Nawaz they never for an instant felt compelled to forsake their attachment to Liverpool football club, or indeed any other football team closer to their homes, still less the odd requirement to stop playing badminton!

As a general rule, readers of *The Sun* do not get to hear the real, authentic Muslim voices we have encountered on this research project. Instead they are told by Nawaz that Muslims must abandon any notion that Islam informs their politics before they can be accepted – like Husain and himself – into the fold. “As he sips a cappuccino in a north London Starbucks” Nawaz's interview in *The Sun* continues, “[he] voices his outrage at this week's protest by Muslim fanatics who hurled abuse at troops during a homecoming parade in Luton.”⁶³³

One of the obvious deficits of this response to anti-Muslim sentiment is that it deflects violent extremist nationalist sentiment away from so-called ‘moderate’ Muslims like Nawaz only to increase the threat of attack faced by Muslims who are erroneously described as ‘extremist’ or ‘radical’ and conflated with Al Muhajiroun by Quilliam. So it proved to be immediately after the Al Muhajiroun demonstration and Nawaz's interview in *The Sun* when a Luton mosque was firebombed. In our interview with the chairman of the firebombed mosque he expressed frustration that divisive voices such as Nawaz's were given prominence and that no support was given to mosques like his even though it had been at the forefront of constructive grass roots youth work in the community.

More recently the Blair Foundation has signalled its intention to lend its weight to help tackle Islamophobia in the UK. Unfortunately, this is an approach that similarly seeks to reduce the threat faced by purportedly ‘moderate’ Muslims like Nawaz while continuing to stigmatise Muslim organisations deemed to be ‘radical’ and thereby increase the risk of attack they face. An ongoing campaign of intimidation by the English Defence League against the unfairly vilified East London Mosque testifies to this phenomenon.

Regrettably this is part and parcel of a divide and rule strategy that has characterised government engagement with Muslim communities since 9/11. A divide and rule strategy has been a conceptual cornerstone of the war on terror from inception. One major Rand report, *Civil Democratic Islam: Partners, Resources and Strategies*, written by Cheryl Bernard, encapsulates the approach that has its roots in neo-conservative ideology.⁶³⁴ Mainstream Muslim organisations are described as ‘radical fundamentalists’ whose antipathy to modern democracy and ‘to Western values in general, and to the United States in particular’ serve as an incontrovertible basis on which to treat them as enemies.⁶³⁵ As such police and government agencies should treat them as targets for investigation or source recruitment.⁶³⁶ Benard, moreover, cautions against accommodating ‘traditionalists’ (by this she appears to mean any seriously practicing Muslim) because to go too far down this road ‘can weaken our credibility and moral persuasiveness’⁶³⁷. “Given the fact that core values are under attack”, she argues, it is “important to affirm the values of Western civilization”.⁶³⁸

Benard’s position here is fully representative of US and UK policy in the war on terror and centrally relevant to our research. When in a subsequent Rand report⁶³⁹ Benard explicitly links her approach to an expansion of the war on terror into a “struggle against ideological extremists who do not believe in free societies, and who happen to use terror as a weapon”⁶⁴⁰, she serves to encapsulate the approach adopted both by Blair’s government, Policy Exchange, Quilliam and the Blair Faith Foundation.

Instead of seeking credible Muslim partners, Benard makes a case for cautiously co-opting modernist Muslims (by this she means individuals on the margins of traditional Islam) so as to “enhance their vision of Islam over that of the traditionalists by providing them with a broad platform to articulate and disseminate their views”.⁶⁴¹ Thus was the role of the Quilliam Foundation conceived. “They, not the traditionalists” Benard concludes, “should be cultivated and publicly presented as the face of contemporary Islam”.⁶⁴²

Community representatives interviewed for our research say their concerns about Rand’s proximity to what they regard as Islamophobic campaigns became urgent when they learnt of a Home Office sponsored Rand research project into Muslim radicalisation in the UK in 2004.⁶⁴³ The fact that this research report has never been published has added to their sense that the previous government was closely intertwined with the covert monitoring of Muslim communities by think-tanks and agencies that are less than impartial.⁶⁴⁴ In fact, community interviewees echo Abdus Sattar Ghazali’s assessment that Rand is encouraging and promoting “so-called modernist Muslims to play one section of society against another” so as to “split the society”.⁶⁴⁵ Ghazali describes the strategy as ‘neo-Orientalism’ and dismisses Benard’s report as a “Machiavellian manifesto that seeks to enforce Western hegemony and cultural imperialism through the policy of ‘divide and rule.’”⁶⁴⁶ When he concludes that “the type of Islam that Benard espouses is a passive and weak Islam that can be easily penetrated and hence reformulated to suit the West’s agenda”⁶⁴⁷ he is encapsulating a view trenchantly expressed by several interviewees.⁶⁴⁸

We publish this introductory report at exactly the same time a small but sufficient number of parliamentarians are considering setting up a long overdue All Party Parliamentary Group to investigate the issues surrounding Islamophobia.⁶⁴⁹ While we welcome such a long overdue initiative and believe strongly in the need for an inclusive approach to such an important task we do urge caution in allowing the very voices that have conceived and driven the war on terror to become equally influential in conceiving and manipulating inadequate responses to the anti-Muslim bigotry, intimidation and violence their earlier actions have done so much to

facilitate. Instead, the government will need to reject Policy Exchange's counter-subversion approach and return to genuine community partnerships if it wants Muslims to help tackle al-Qaeda influence in the UK without creating and targeting suspect Muslim communities.

It is not too late for government to challenge the neo-conservative ideology being thrust upon it by Policy Exchange and its allies and re-build trust with responsible Muslim organisations. Not only is it morally reprehensible to treat responsible and law-abiding Muslim citizens as a subversive threat, it is also hugely counter-productive. If ministers continue to follow Quilliam's Policy Exchange and advice they will begin to jeopardise social cohesion as well as effective and legitimate counter-terrorism in the UK. Instead, urgent government action is needed to help remove the stigma that attaches to many Muslim organisations at the forefront of tackling Islamophobia and other hate crimes in deprived communities in the UK.

We recommend government and parliament begins to take the issue of Islamophobia and discrimination seriously after a decade of neglect. It is a litmus test for the new coalition government's commitment to fairness and social justice. Instead of funding divisive projects like Quilliam to denigrate and smear mainstream Muslim organisations government should adopt an inclusive approach to dialogue with Muslim community representatives.

38. Anti-Muslim hate crime: urgent government action

Violence and intimidation of Muslims and their places of worship and congregation has been at an unacceptable level since 9/11 and after a decade of neglect under the last New Labour administration the new coalition government of Conservatives and Liberal Democrats has an opportunity to tackle it belatedly but before it becomes worse still.

39. Anti-Muslim hate crime: urgent community action and funding needed

The moral imperative of public safety is no less urgent for community activists, voluntary bodies and charities concerned to make an impact at the grass roots. Established campaigning groups will not need advice from us about the tactical advantage of pursuing genuine grass roots remedies and not simply of waiting for government interest and support. Community projects such as the Muslim Safety Forum that aspire to provide 24/7 support to victims of anti-Muslim hate crime urgently need community funding and support.

40. Our aim for 2020

In the thirteen years since the Runnymede Trust published *Islamophobia: A Challenge For Us All* the problem of anti-Muslim hate crimes in Europe has grown worse not better. Muslims are the victims of hate crimes every day, often being spat at and verbally abused and on occasions suffering serious physical violence as well as witnessing arson and graffiti attacks on their mosques and Islamic centres. Our aim is that by 2020 much of the ignorance and bigotry that motivates these attacks will have been dispelled and that the incidence of anti-Muslim hate crimes will have reduced significantly. This, we believe, is crucially important so that all Muslims come to feel that the European countries where they live are safe, secure and congenial homes.

What do we see as the key to achieving this objective? The answer is simple: public education. Just as public education initiatives to reduce the vilification and stigmatisation of other European minorities have achieved success in the past so we believe it will be possible during the next ten years to counter and correct the adverse impact of false, Islamophobic accounts of Muslims as threats to European safety, security and cohesion that permeate both

mainstream politics and extremist nationalist political agendas. As academics we believe we have an important role to play in this education process. Indeed, the main motivation for us launching the European Muslim Research Centre is so we can help educate politicians, media, police, public servants and the public about the positive contributions of Muslims to the political, economic and cultural wellbeing of the European countries where they reside and of Europe generally. This task has become especially important because a significant number of both mainstream and extremist nationalist politicians and commentators have convinced wide sections of the public that Muslims in Europe pose a threat to safety, security and social cohesion.

Why ten years? Public education takes time. Racism is still prevalent in Europe but over the last ten years we have seen real reductions in discrimination against many minority ethnic communities in Europe. We would like future historians to record this new decade as the one where Islamophobia and the hate crime it gives rise to was effectively tackled by politicians and public servants in the same way they have tackled racism and anti-Semitism.

We reject, as fundamentally flawed, the position currently held by too many commentators: that European Muslims, Islam and strict adherence to Islam poses a threat to the safety, cohesion and well being of communities and countries in Europe. Our research agenda is posited on the belief that negative analyses of the contribution of Muslim communities to European society, if left unchallenged, may create the conditions necessary by which these pernicious ideas become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

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631 Dodd, Vikram, 2010. op. cit.

632 EMRC 57/10.

633 Harvey, Oliver, 2009. op. cit.

634 Benard, Cheryl, 2003. *Civil Democratic Islam: Partners, Resources and Strategies*. Santa Monica: Rand Corporation. The main points in the report are repeated in Benard, Cheryl, 2005. *Democracy and Islam: The Struggle in the Islamic World - A Strategy for the United States*. In: David Aaron, ed., *Three Years After: Next Steps in the War on Terror*. Santa Monica: Rand Corporation, pp. 15–20.

635 Benard, Cheryl, 2003, p.27.

636 See Great Britain. Home Office. 2006. *Covert Human Intelligence Sources: Code of Practice*. London: The Stationary Office.

637 Benard, Cheryl, 2003, p.36.

638 By citing Bernard Lewis at this point Benard declares her debt to the Clash of Civilisations thesis (the term was coined by Lewis before Samuel Huntington made it famous); Benard, Cheryl, 2003, p.36.

639 Benard, Cheryl, 2005. *Democracy and Islam: The Struggle in the Islamic World - A Strategy for the United States*. In: David Aaron, ed., *Three Years After: Next Steps in the War on Terror*. Santa Monica: Rand Corporation, pp. 15–20.

640 President Bush speech, 6.8.06, quoted by Benard, Cheryl, 2005, p.15.

641 Benard, Cheryl, 2003, p.47.

642 Benard, Cheryl, 2003, p.47.

643 EMRC 60/10.

644 Ibid.

645 Ghazali, Abdus Sattar, 2005. Rand reports attempt to change Islam. *Islamic Awakening.Com*. <<http://www.islamicawakening.com/viewarticle.php?articleID=1214>> p.1-4.

646 Ghazali, Abdus Sattar, 2005, p.3

647 Ghazali, Abdus Sattar, 2005, p.3

648 EMRC 60/10.

649 Engage, 2010. Engage briefing note for MPs: an All Party Parliamentary Group on Islamophobia. September.

"MOSQUE"

YES!

HATE

NO!

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About the authors



DR ROBERT LAMBERT is co-director of the European Muslim Research Centre (EMRC) at the University of Exeter and a part-time lecturer at the Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence (CSTPV) at the University of St. Andrews. In January 2010 EMRC published *Islamophobia and Anti-Muslim Hate Crime: a London Case Study* co-authored by Lambert, the first report in a ten year programme of Europe-wide research on the topic. Lambert's twin research interests are Islamophobia and community based approaches to counter-terrorism. Both topics are reflected in his book *Countering Al-Qaeda in Britain: Police and Muslim Communities in Partnership* London: Hurst (forthcoming 2011). Since January 2008 Lambert has conducted research and written reports and articles in partnership with Dr Jonathan Githens-Mazer, co-director, EMRC.

For the bulk of his police service (1977-2007) Lambert worked in counter-terrorism, gaining operational experience of tackling all forms of violent political threats to the UK, from Irish republican to the many strands of international terrorism that include what is best described as the al-Qaeda movement. One common denominator in all the many and varied terrorist recruitment strategies he witnessed over the years is the exploitation of a sense of political injustice. Throughout his police career Lambert placed value on street or grass roots perspectives over more rigid top down security approaches to counter-terrorism. In January 2002, together with a police colleague Lambert set up the Muslim Contact Unit (MCU), with the purpose of establishing partnerships with Muslim community leaders both equipped and located to help tackle the spread of al-Qaeda propaganda in London. This role enabled him to participate in some pioneering and successful counter-terrorism community engagement projects. It also provided Lambert with opportunities to support Muslim community groups when they faced Islamophobic attacks. In recognition he was presented with the first 'Friends of Islam' Award by Dr Mohammad Abdul Bari, Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Britain, at the annual Global Peace and Unity event in November 2007. He was also presented with awards by Islam Expo, Islamic Human Rights Commission, Interpal and several other Muslim groups. In June 2008 he was awarded an MBE for his police service.



DR JONATHAN GITHENS-MAZER is co-director of the European Muslim Research Centre (EMRC) and a Senior Lecturer at the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies (IAIS) at the University of Exeter.

Githens-Mazer's original focus for research was on radicalisation and nationalism – particularly examining how myths, memories and symbols of the past (which he often describes as the stories that Grandmothers tell Grandchildren) create bases for contemporary political mobilisation and even for participation in violence. While his first book, based on his PhD, examined this in light of the 1916 Easter Rising, subsequent research has focused on similar processes both within North Africa (particularly Algeria), and amongst North Africans living in Europe.

Several of Githens-Mazer's articles and chapters have specifically examined how recruitment to Islamically inspired political violence was conducted by framing participation in a manner which 'resonated' with intended audiences – such that issues of Algerian colonial repression and more recent events in Palestine were often mixed together into one broad narrative of justification to carry out attacks in Britain and beyond. All of this research has been qualitative and ethnographic in nature, on the one hand requiring a long term commitment to research in these communities, but on the other returning thick description and analysis that could otherwise be absent in trying to understand what is actually happening 'on the street'. The research which Githens-Mazer has conducted on Economic and Social Research Council Grants has allowed him to not only expand his study of 'radicalisation', but to also become deeply involved in the policy-maker and practitioner debates about what this concept means, its causal relationship with terrorism, and the implications of policies of 'counter-radicalisation' for Britain's Muslim communities. This has allowed him to translate complex research findings into publicly digestible contributions in the media.

This initial focus has led on to other avenues of research, especially Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hate crime, which has skyrocketed in the wake of the 9/11 and 7/7 attacks, and perpetrators of these kinds of crimes often site an inherent belief that Islam is contra the West and democracy, or even inherently violent, as their rationales for carrying out these activities. Seeing how empirical data collection and analysis can have real impact for policy makers and communities has been one of the benefits of conducting this research, as well as presenting research findings to, and participating in key discussions with members of the British, American, Egyptian, Singaporean, Russian and other governments and NGOs.