Counter-Islamophobia Kit

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Key National Messages - UK

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Countering Islamophobia through the Development of Best Practice in the use of Counter-Narratives in EU Member States.

CIK Project (Counter Islamophobia Kit)

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About the CIK Project

The *Countering Islamophobia through the Development of Best Practice in the use of Counter-Narratives in EU Member States* (Counter Islamophobia Kit, CIK) project addresses the need for a deeper understanding and awareness of the range and operation of counter-narratives to anti-Muslim hatred across the EU, and the extent to which these counter-narratives impact and engage with those hostile narratives. It is led by Professor Ian Law and a research team based at the Centre for Ethnicity and Racism Studies, School of Sociology and Social Policy, University of Leeds, UK. This international project also includes research teams from the Islamic Human Rights Commission, based in London, and universities in Leeds, Athens, Liège, Budapest, Prague and Lisbon/Coimbra. This project runs from January 2017 - December 2018.

About the Paper

This paper is an output from the third workstream of the project which was centred on describe the key national messages pertaining to Islamophobia and countering-Islamophobia in each context considered in the framework of this project: Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Portugal and United Kingdom. The key national messages, findings and toolkit, the Counter-Islamophobia Kit (CIK) will be disseminated to policy makers, professionals and practitioners both across the EU and to member/regional audiences using a range of mediums and activities.

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Executive Summary
The last two decades have witnessed a steep rise in anti-Muslim prejudice, discrimination and violence in Britain. Studies such as those by Ameli and Merali (2015) have all shown an increase in anti-Muslim antipathy to the extent that it can be said that the experience of Islamophobia has become almost universal for Muslims. While Islamophobia is indeed a relatively new term it bespeaks a phenomenon that is centuries old and has its roots in racial discourse. As victims of racialisation and racialised discourse Muslims are thus victims of institutional racism in the same manner as Jews. The study found that narratives of Islamophobia in Britain are subsumed under four overarching meta-narratives:

1. **Muslims as a security threat (and therefore in need of regulation by way of exceptional law, policy and social praxis).**
2. **Disloyalty and the threat to internal democracy**
3. **Islam as a counter to 'Britishness' / 'Fundamental British Values'**
4. **Muslims in need of integration (assimilation)**

In effect, Islamophobia has become part of the fabric of a national story of what it means to be British. Not only is Britishness navigated through a denial of Muslimness, it is also represented through the articulation of supremacism as a normal facet of law and nation. Therefore, for counter narratives to be effective they need to operate at every level of society, most crucially the state and media, and confront issues such as structural racism that are wider and more-deep rooted than Islamophobia per se.

The study also identified the ten most important counter-narratives in the UK context:
1. **Decentring conversations on Islam and Muslims from current institutionalised narratives.**
2. **Diversifying the understanding of what, who and how is a Muslim, and the acceptance of this plurality within a plural understanding of the nation.**
3. **Contextualising the nature and level of 'threat' posed by political violence per se by reviewing the epistemology of current security policies.**
4. **Acknowledging structural issues and racism(s)**
5. **Acknowledging Islamophobia as a form of violence that is relational to both recent and colonial history and current events in various Westernised settings that refer to each other in order to perpetuate each other.**
6. **Removing hierarchies of racism and acknowledging Islamophobia as a form of racism**
7. **A refocus on equalities, or ideas of injustice as the normative focus of the state.**
8. **Accuracy in, agitation for and sanction for failure in delivering accurate representation in particular but not solely media representation.**
9. **A cultural shift in understanding who is part of the national, and how national histories have been intimately intertwined with Muslims and Muslim cultures and nations over centuries.**
10. **Recapturing and creating further space for Muslim narratives of being.**

Developing effective counter-narratives is essential in order to stem the tide of Islamophobia sweeping the nation. Counter-narratives must reset the parameters of conversations about Islam and Muslims, unconditionally including Muslims in the national conversation on their own terms. The casting of Muslims as somehow living outside the idea of 'Britishness' needs to be challenged in a way that allows for a pluralistic conception of the term in opposition to the narrow and exclusivist conception that has gained traction in recent years.

Worryingly however this study found a sense that engagement with government, media and other main institutions was mainly futile because they are seen as presiding over and reproducing Islamophobic narratives. The narrowing of representations of Muslimness, the squeezing out of Muslims from public and political space by accusations of extremism and entryism, and the rising of a nationalistic and nativist discourse around Britishness that constructs its identity against various tropes of Muslimness all serve as markers of expulsion of Muslims from equality as citizens.

This report into counter-narratives to Islamophobia is necessitated by the exponential rise in anti-Muslim prejudice, discrimination and violence in Britain over at least the last two decades and its acceleration since the turn of the decade.

While Islamophobia is indeed a relatively new term it bespeaks a phenomenon that is centuries old and has its roots in racial discourse. Therefore, our approach understands Muslims as victims of racialization and racialized discourse and thus victims of racism in the same manner (and often through the same performative functions) as Jews are victims of racism.

Grosfoguel's work has identified the origins of British anti-Muslim racism in the transatlantic slave trade which brought the nascent imperial power into direct colonial contact with Muslim subjects. Skepticism with respect to the humanity of the indigenous would be transposed and readapted to the African slave (Maldanao-Torres, 2014). This fundamental questioning of the humanity of those enslaved forms a basis for discourses of 'subalternisation' in the modern era (Grosfoguel and Mielants, 2006) that finds expression in British narratives of 'otherness'.

The collapsing of the idea of Muslimness and Blackness, and Muslimness and barbarity, viewed through the European conceptualization of 'Saracen' in the context of the Crusades and the rise of the Ottoman caliphate provide a context for a sustained narrative of the Muslim as subaltern. The colonization of India by the British gave rise to another set of interactions where political expediency demanded another set of justifications for control and subjugation. Indeed, the term 'mussulmanophobic' was coined by one official to explain the Indian Civil Service mindset in 1857 at the time of the Indian Mutiny (Padamsee - undated), which seen by the imperial power as a conspiracy by Muslims to whose 'treachery' it also ascribed fanaticism, bloodthirstiness and the idea of wider Muslim complicity based on bonds of faith.

Thus, Islamophobia as a form of racialization that not only discriminates against Muslims but negates Muslim agency and aspiration, forms the crux of an understanding of how Islamophobia functions in the UK context. Islamophobia as a form of racism against Muslim people is not only manifested in the labour market, education, public sphere, global war against terrorism, the global economy, but also at the epistemological level where Muslims are denied their own agency, negated as legitimate actors with legitimate concerns because 'the thinking that comes from non-Western locations [that] is not considered worthy of attention except to represent it as "uncivilised," "primitive," "barbarian," and "backward".' (Grosfoguel and Mileants, 2006).

The demonization of Muslims has been both latent in Anglophonic culture but also part of a cycle of policy and narrative over the course of centuries where such tropes have served politically expedient purposes. 'Islamophobia' as a neologism emerging in the post-Rushdie context is therefore not the name of a new problem but the articulation of a term that can capture the experiences and dehumanization long felt by Muslims as a result of particular interaction with, in this case, British institutions and the British state, whether as citizen or colonial subject or slave.

It is significant that there has been a consistent feeling that political discourse has worsened with regard to Islamophobia and racism, particularly after the 2016 murder of MP Jo Cox. It is

alarming not least because a survey of Muslims in 2014 by the IHRC found that between the 2010 and 2014 (Ameli and Merali 2015) results for the question, "How often have you heard Islamophobic comments by politicians?" had significantly worsened. This finding is set against the backdrop of a rise in anti-Muslim antipathy on every single measure since the survey was last conducted in 2010, suggesting that by the middle of the decade the experience of Islamophobia had become almost universal for Muslims.

This first report (Workstream 1) identifies the **ten most dominant narratives of Islamophobia** in the UK.

(i)   Disloyalty and the Threat to Internal Democracy

The rise of the narrative of Muslims as disloyal (and therefore in need of social engineering and state intervention), and its development into a narrative of Muslims as ostracized and outliers who perfect strategies of entryism as a means to inveigle themselves into institutions and positions of power has picked up a pace in recent years. This has then been used to imply that there is a substantive threat to internal democracy from Muslim participation in civic life which then feeds further into the idea of Muslim deviance and threat, and undergirds policies that seek to curtail Muslim engagement in civil institutions as well as silence their protests regarding any number of issues.

(ii)   Islam as a counter to 'Britishness' / 'Fundamental British Values'

Muslims cannot be expected to conform to national mainstream values of the (white native) majority. This narrative, which is often manufactured with the help of state-engineered moral panics, legitimises state intervention and social engineering, ostensibly to bring Muslims into the mainstream but in reality to justify their subjugation. The most prominent recent example was the Trojan Horse affair which raised the spectre of a concerted plan by 'Islamists' to take over several state schools. Reported thus in the media, it was picked up by government which launched the above litany of investigations at huge public expense, none of which found any wrong-doing on the part of those involved (bar one example of inappropriate language being used in a private messaging group amongst some teachers). What was obscured in the reporting and even the investigations was that those involved were being judged on the basis of their actions and aspirations set within otherwise acceptable norms with regard to education in the United Kingdom.

(iii) Muslims and 'extremism'

While there is no accepted definition of 'extremism' advanced by the state and deliberately so, the idea is often defined in opposition to practices misleadingly presented as uniquely or largely restricted to Muslims such as female genital mutilation, paedophilia and radicalisation. In 2009, a leaked document said that "government and civil servants were planning to widen the definition of exactly what beliefs constituted extremist views." It specifically mentioned the following markers of extremists:

"• They advocate a caliphate, a pan-Islamic state encompassing many countries.

"• They promote Sharia law.

"• They believe in jihad, or armed resistance, anywhere in the world. This would include armed resistance by Palestinians against the Israeli military.

"• They argue that Islam bans homosexuality and that it is a sin against Allah.
"• They fail to condemn the killing of British soldiers in Iraq or Afghanistan." (IHRC, 2009).

(iv) Muslims as a security threat (and therefore in need of regulation by way of exceptional law, policy and social praxis).

The most evident example of this can be seen in the drawing up and implementation of The Preventing Violent Extremism policy (PREVENT) which has been in operation since 2005. Academics (Sayyid 2010a, 15 as argued by Sian, 2013) have described it as 'the disciplining of Muslims by reference to an antagonistic western horizon'. From its inception human and civil rights groups have seen PREVENT as a social engineering and spying exercise to transform attitudes in the Muslim community and gather intelligence on its members. As an integral part of discriminatory anti-terrorism legislation Prevent has become an aggressive tool for the state to control the community.

(v)   Muslim misogyny and perversion and the oppressed Muslim woman

Various tropes are subsumed in this narrative that harks back to the idea of the seraglio (Progler, 2008) and the women of the harem. Whilst the idea of the sexuality of the Muslim woman has transformed from the harlot of the harem (Ameli and Merali, 2015) to that of sexually oppressed/submissive (with the veil as a symbol of this), there continues to be a concurrent dissonant narrative of Muslim women as dangerous and criminal, as well as the cultural and physical vanguard of the supposed 'Islamisation' of society.

(vi) Muslims as subhuman and unable to socialize to 'human' norms

The markers of sub-humanity of Muslims are not particular to Muslims, and have been instrumentalized by negative policy discourse against various communities at different times. These include the ideas of Muslims as intrinsically violent, as lazy, as illiterate (either willfully or intrinsically), un-Enlightened (inherently so) and sexually deviant.

(vii)   Muslims as segregationists

Muslims are posited as both gender segregationists internally, but crucially segregationist vis a vis issues of integration. This runs through ideas of Muslim no-go areas promulgated and platformed by both far-right groups but also mainstream figures such as Bishop Nazir Ali (Wynne-Jones, 2008 and Brown, 2009) and the Henry Jackson Society (Treptow and Stuart, 2015), despite regular debunking of the idea that such areas exist. The issue of dress, in particular but not solely the niqab, has been a recurrent narrative that claims inter alia the idea of emotional separateness of Muslims. Likewise, the desire for Muslim faith schools has been historically pathologized, despite the existence of faiths schools across religious spectra.

(viii)   Muslims in need of integration (assimilation)

The trope of a segregationist anti-integration Muslim society within British society continues to find expression in media and political discourse, leading to policy interventions that fuel the cycle of negative discourse. The launch of the official Casey Review into Integration and Opportunity in December 2016 supposedly looked at the challenges faced by communities. It was widely lauded by UKIP, some government ministers and politicians, and various parts of the commentariat. However, it was also deeply criticized for methodological failings, and an obsession with Islam and Muslims, with the word Muslim used 249 times in a 200 page report (with the Polish community mentioned only 12 times), and Islam mentioned over 100 times.

(ix) Immigration and the demographic threat

Immigration as demonized discourse in the UK can be traced back several decades. In the 1950s - 1970s the marking out of immigrant communities as problematic was largely based on biological racism and the marking out of 'national' cultures. Anti-Muslim / Islamophobic specificity in various discourses arose in two distinct scenarios: the idea of second and third generations of British citizens who were also Muslim and could not be targeted as the first generation as 'immigrants; and those who arrived as asylum seekers and refugees in the 1990s and onwards.

(x) Muslim spaces as incubators

Mosques, Islamic centres, Islamic schools or Muslim majority schools, madrasas, shariah councils, cemeteries and potential Islamic spaces have been frequent targets of hate crimes. Conceptually however they have also been targeted by government, media and legislative oversight as spaces that incubate all of the foregoing tropes. The violation of Muslim spaces, in particular mosques and schools, speaks to the idea of being able to 'touch', in this case Muslim space, in the name of desegregation.

The ten narratives are subsumed (with some crossover) between the following four overarching themes, listed in order of prominence and impact.

•   Muslims as a security threat (and therefore in need of regulation by way of exceptional law, policy and social praxis)
•   Disloyalty and the threat to internal democracy
•   Islam as a counter to 'Britishness' / 'Fundamental British Values'
•   Muslims in need of integration (assimilation).

Counter-narratives to Islamophobia

1.   Decentring conversations on Islam and Muslims from current institutionalised narratives.

Muslims find themselves continuously having to defend themselves against the pathologised narratives constructed of them as extremists, traitors, different and outsiders. Simply reproducing cultural forms in order to provide counter-narratives to the problems caused by that perpetuate the problem. Counter-narratives need therefore to reset the parameters of the conversations about Islam and Muslims whether this is in academia or in policy-making. The national conversation and the national story needs to recognise Muslims' humanity and independent agency and include Muslims regardless and without conditions. Muslims being seen to interact with other issues, not just Muslim ones, is a way that the media and political realms can send messages to wider society about the place of Muslims in the UK, where "… Muslim commentators in the media are seen to be addressing other intelligent and resourceful issues not just religious ones … that is surely one of the things that would make a difference. This [Muslims] is a set of resources, identities, convictions that can contribute to a general civil discourse, not just one about religion, but about justice, poverty, the environment etc." (Williams, 2017)

2.   Diversifying the understanding of what, who and how is a Muslim, and the acceptance of this plurality within a plural understanding of the nation.

The rise of the idea of Britishness (Workstream 1, and Ameli and Merali, 2015) and the narrative of Islam as a counter to 'Britishness' and 'Fundamental British Values' (FBV) has narrowed the conversation around what is the nation. Both 'identities' are homogenized in a false manner, creating a fictitious dichotomy between British and Muslim, both imaginings of which are projected AT Muslims. With Muslims considered beyond the pale the expectations of Muslims from the government, media and wider society is beset with a conditionality not expected from any other citizen, be they from a minoritized community or the majority community. An effective counter-narrative needs to address this failure to include Muslims whether as individuals or groups within the story of the (one) nation. This extends not just to understanding the diversity of Muslims, but also in naming the problems Muslims face and also the problems of society in general. The idea of who or what is a Muslim and the problems society faces are not so easily collapsible as the current narratives of Islamophobia claim, and recognising this in the production of public discourse is a first step. As Arun Kundnani says: ""…what's important [is] to have alongside that some more radical counter-narratives that in the end… will be necessary to really get to the root of this issue. Those ultimately take us to questions of empire and the economic system that we live under… that's one of the roots by which the discussion about Islamophobia connects over to issues of both class and issues of foreign policy and makes it part of the conversation that is ultimately a deeper crisis in British society. That part of the conversation is often neglected because it feels like it's starting to sound conspiratorial or it feels like it's starting to sound like the usual accusation of being apologist or terrorist. But I think it's a necessary part of the conversation."

3. Contextualising the nature and level of 'threat' posed by political violence per se by reviewing the epistemology of current security policies.

Securitization haunts every discourse regarding Muslims. Denied acceptance and thus the rights and assumed dignity of citizenship, Muslims are not considered to be British (Workstream 1). This perverse logic followed through sees them projected as living or existing not in Britain but in 'Islam' or 'Islamism whatever that may be' (François, 2015 in Workstream 2) in a public discourse that allows them to be excluded from equal citizenship in the wider public psyche. Opposition to the tropes of the narratives that undergird the securitization of Muslims, and the exceptional praxis of law and state against them has been framed largely by civil society calling for at the very least a review of the Prevent policy and its introduction into law since early 2016, to an all-out call for the repealing of ALL anti-terrorism laws. Qureshi (2017 in Workstream 2) believes one effective counter narrative to the securitization discourse can be found in the approach taken by Marc Sageman who uses Bayesian probability analysis to make an assessment about what the actual threat is that is posed to non-Muslims by Muslims in the Western world. "According to him, it ultimately boils down to one Muslim per million per year. That is the threat that is posed to the Western World...That's what we should be saying. All of this exceptional policy, this securitization, exists despite the fact that 999,999 Muslims out of one million pose no threat at all to the West," says Qureshi. The call for a review of Prevent being taken up in some political circles is an achievement, however what is more significant is that the new independent reviewer of the anti-terrorism laws, Max Hill QC, the independent reviewer of terrorism legislation, has spoken of the ideal scenario where there would be no anti-terrorism laws, and crimes of political violence would be prosecuted using the existing gamut of criminal law, confirming that in this instance a

counter-narrative to (Islamophobic) securitization that was much maligned when expressed by Muslims and civil society alliances has found mainstream acceptance.

4. Acknowledging structural issues and racism(s)

Islamophobia needs to be seen as part of the wider crisis of institutional racism in British society. Whilst the UK has been celebrated (or demonized) for its equalities culture in the past, that culture has found itself under attack as a result of unbridled Islamophobic narratives normalizing racism in society once more. As the Macpherson inquiry report (1999) phrased 'institutional racism' moves beyond the accumulation of the prejudices of individuals, the 'bad apples' seeing racism as structural, 'institutional racism'. This manifests in a variety of ways, but notably with regard to taking-action for redress against injustice or simply accessing the structures and rules of the state, the following issues are hugely restricted for Muslims:
(i)   Accessing justice
(ii)   Immigration rules
(iii)   Accumulation of debt around (i) and (ii)
(iv)   The roll out of functions of the state to the private sector
(v)   How hate crimes are recorded, investigated and prosecuted.
Economic and other barriers to the justice and legal system such as the withdrawal of legal aid need to be removed. Police officers must receive better training in how to deal with race and/or Islamophobically motivated offences. There needs to be serious revision of the epistemologies of anti-racism and equalities within institutions to prevent Islamophobic discourse from becoming mainstream and accepted practice, such as in the requirements imposed by the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 for public sector employees to refer anyone they suspect of extremism to the police. The setting up of more community initiatives and the community and independent funding of civil society organisations providing advocacy services and legal support for individuals needing support is an increasingly needed support strategy.

5. Acknowledging Islamophobia as a form of violence that is relational to both recent and colonial history and current events in various Westernised settings that refer to each other in order to perpetuate each other.

To challenge the dark form of exclusivist nationalism which we've seen take over in Brexit we need alternative national conversations which look back at the history of the UK, not in an exclusivist or racist way, but in one which acknowledges the history of the multiple peoples who now inhabit this island and acknowledges the multiple ways in which the UK historically was intertwined with other cultures and civilisations. There is a need for academia and government and its institutions to acknowledge ongoing histories and reframe not just current 'problems' but question the framing of the problems themselves. Existing counter-narratives that have been deployed in this regard have included the following:
(i)   responding to government consultations on laws and policies (Islamic Human Rights Commission, 2015);
(ii)   increasing Muslim participation in the academy, and other institutions, services and professions;
(iii)   individual and community projects that try to show Muslims in their 'true' light;
(iv)   inter-faith and outreach work;
(v)   awareness raising events, third party reporting projects and projects around street level Islamophobia and discrimination.

However, these are all short-term strategies, which when operating without more long-term strategic vision, can serve to simply reinforce the cycle of exclusion. All the above respond directly to narratives of Islamophobia and thus risk what Malik (2014) identified as reinforcing their connection with and thus validating narratives of Islamophobia. Counter-narrative work cited as examples of good practice and work which address the long-term aims of countering Islamophobia begin with the need for they type of barrier breaking interventions in the public space as well as civil society groups led by those working with and giving voice to those directly affected. In the words of the UN Rapporteur on Religious Freedom "it is not the Government's role to look for the "true voices of Islam" or of any other religion or belief. Since religions or communities of belief are not homogenous entities it seems advisable to acknowledge and take into account the diversity of voices. The Special Rapporteur reiterates that the contents of a religion or belief should be defined by the worshippers themselves." There is also an overwhelming case for a well-balanced religious and cultural studies syllabus to look at how religious 'others' are constituted and set up and essentialized.

6.   Removing hierarchies of racism and acknowledging Islamophobia as a form of racism
The call for parity between minoritized and / or religious communities i.e. the acceptance of minority identity and the 'benefits' that go with it should be on a par across major religious minorities, or indeed across major religions (Beth Din courts, the Synod, Muslim arbitration). This can provide (i) examples of good (state) practice; (ii) a marker by which to measure the treatment of Muslims by the state; but counterintuitely (iii) can inhibit the improvement of the situation of Muslims but also (in this case) Jews, by using certain aspects of recognition of 'Jewish' identity as the final point of good practice regarding religious and or racialized communities in the UK. A particular sector feeling Islamophobic pressure is civil society. Organisations, whether constituted as charities or not have felt the brunt of a media and political focus that singles them out in a manner distinct from other communities (see Workstream 1 for a summary). Accountability for this situation is required and also forms the basis of expectations of equality of expectation and treatment between minority community charities.

The invisibalisation of racialized individuals and groups also requires redress. In this regard educational space and workplace cultures have peculiar anomalies in creating hierarchies of racism where anti-racist measures (insofar as they are obliged to exist via equalities policies) are made as a one size fits all and do not always cover issues that are a bar to Muslim participation e.g. socializing and bonding around alcohol after work, participating in school discos or dance classes, uniform requirements that do not take in the diversity of Muslim expectations and beliefs etc. Finding ways of tackling the different experiences of inequality faced by different racialized or marginalized communities and groups within institutional settings is imperative if existing equalities norms are to be achieved. This could include in the school setting, clearer guidance from government on issues such as uniform (currently there is no specific advice from the government regarding the rights to wear religiously mandated clothing); working around issues like times of fasting and breaking fast, prayer times, fasting during exam periods etc.

7.   A refocus on equalities, or ideas of injustice as the normative focus of the state.
The UK's culture of equalities was hitherto much celebrated in civil society within and outside the UK as one of the most progressive. However, the rise of an anti-multiculturalist narrative

and the rise of a nativist discourse have increasingly rendered this history as inimical to British values and a threat to the internal democracy of the UK (Workstream 1). In this scenario, Muslims are posited as the vanguards of multiculturalism, who are simultaneously seen to be promoting a segregationist agenda (and therefore are in need of assimilation / integration) but also as entryists whose civic participation is construed as seeking to advance an 'Islamist', 'privileging', 'extremist', 'segregationist' cause. Many laws and policies still in existence need bolstering in the legal culture but also the popular imagination. This includes rules regarding employment discrimination (Ahmed, 2017 in Workstream 2), existing equalities cultures established in education (Choudhury, 2017 in Workstream 2), the setting up of parliamentary and ministerial oversight committees for controversial or contested regulations or pressing social issues. This refocus on equalities is a way to cut through demonized narrative such as the pushback from managers at universities, albeit a brief moment, against Prevent on the basis of the equalities impact of these policies.

Current equality laws presided over by Equality and Human Rights Commission suffers from systemic problems associated with "a simplification of equality laws and the joining up of the distinct equality strands (which) enables Britain to construct itself as a progressive, 'post-racial' liberal society, thus racism becomes invisible and is instead understood as a human rights issue. That is the bringing together of all groups and dispensing with single issue bodies such as the CRE, sustains and strengthens the notion that 'we are all the same' and as such reinforces the discourse of colour blindness, universalism and unification which masks the persistence of structural inequalities that remain embedded within contemporary Britain. [Sian et al 2010]". The implication, therefore, is that the equalities law enforcement needs to be overhauled to take account of the diversity and particularity of racialized/minoritized experiences.

8.   Accuracy in, agitation for and sanction for failure in delivering accurate representation in particular but not solely media representation.

Whilst disproportionately affecting Muslims, the operation of mainstream media is deeply problematized in the wider UK culture, as the Leveson Inquiry (2012) bears testament to, the business of which remains unfinished with calls for an urgent review circulating at the time of writing (Hacked Off, 2017). The media in particular is acknowledged as underpinning, reinforcing, (re)producing and normalizing anti-Muslim political and public discourse. Tackling this falls broadly into the categories of:

(i)   Civil society initiatives and responses; successes and critiques thereof;

The Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO) is ineffective in challenging misrepresentation of individual Muslims. The scope of IPSO is still limited to redress against named individuals rather than issues of demonization and racist narratives that target communities, groups or organizations. Without a longer-term strategy initiatives that sought to use IPSO and other regulatory mechanisms are at risk of reinforcing a problematic narrative (Narkowicz, 2017 in Workstream 2) that existing mechanisms were adequate and that Muslims were unable or unwilling to use these to make reasonable claims.

(ii)   Mainstream and Alternative Media initiatives, media (self)regulation, reform and cultural transformation; However civil society practice cannot fix the power imbalance between parties. This requires an expansion of coverage of Muslim community affairs and of race and Islamophobia problems through permanent assignment of reporters familiar with the issues around these affairs, and through establishment of more and better links with the Muslim community. The Muslim community is a diverse one, and the media needs to engage

with that diversity and not promote or rely on sensationalist or apologetic voices that simply help propagate deeply held negative ideas. It requires the integration of Muslims and Muslim activities into all aspects of coverage and content, including newspaper articles and television programming. The news media must publish newspapers and produce programmes that recognise the existence and activities of Muslims as a group within the community and as a part of the larger community. The media must recruit more Muslims into journalism and broadcasting and promote those who are qualified to positions of significant responsibility. And the industry should support education initiatives for senior mainstream media personnel around issues of Islamophobia and how to avoid it.'

(iii)   State re-evaluation of media monopolies and laws regulating hate speech. With media self-regulation having been proven to be worryingly ineffective it falls on the state to enact anti-hate speech legislation to criminalise Islamophobia and other forms of hate expression in the media. Whilst issues like the 'glorification of terrorism' and 'incitement to religious and racial hatred' are covered in parts of the anti-terrorism and existing criminal law, their extend seems to be heavily biased towards prosecuting Muslims and racialized groups. There is an argument that such laws must either be used against non-racialized perpetrators including those given a media platform e.g. Katie Hopkins whose columns and social media comments have been heavily criticized for demonizing Muslims, migrants and other minorities. Whilst curtailing speech is always a controversial demand, the current situation where the speech of Muslims is criminalized but that of those who call for a 'final solution' against Muslims is not, cannot be allowed to continue. Either there is consistent application of these laws, or their total repeal or a total review to make effective the boundaries that have always existed regarding what is and is not hate speech and can and cannot be allowed. The monopolisation of media ownership also needs tackling. The government must take steps to resist the trend towards consolidation in the media industry, both for reasons of free speech and because minority groups do not have the financial clout to buy into conglomerates and are therefore at risk of further exclusion.

9.   A cultural shift in understanding who is part of the national, and how national histories have been intimately intertwined with Muslims and Muslim cultures and nations over centuries.

The history of the UK is intimately intertwined with those of some of its minority ethnic and religious communities. More academic but also cultural review of these histories is a way of resetting the collective imagination as to who is part of the nation. These attempts are not necessarily in and of themselves a panacea and those attempting to do this need to be mindful not to reproduce cycles of exclusion of Muslim and other racialized voices. Efforts like those of the Forgotten Heroes Foundation that highlight the Muslim contribution in terms of manpower in the First World War are an example of a successful civil society initiative challenging the 'otherness' and 'unBritishness' of Muslims. The attempts to interrogate historical erasure, even in the most conformist manner (Forgotten Heroes does not challenge current narratives of the First World War) are left almost entirely to civil society and there must be uptake amongst wider cultural producers, rather than the rise of a culture of erasure. This widening or equalizing of what it means to be part of the nation should have an inevitable knock on effect on legal interpretations of rules (Ahmed, 2017 in Workstream 2) just as the converse is currently seen to be true in equalities related law and policy. The willingness to engage fascism and give fascists a public platform in the media is a particularly alarming development. Far-right voices are finding an outlet on mainstream media through the idea of

'balance'. Addressing this shift in the values of the reporting center or of balance between extremes that allows far-right narratives to be normalized needs to be urgently addressed by editors.

10.   Recapturing and creating further space for Muslim narratives of being

There exists a need for movement building which includes creating spaces for those marginalized to be able to not only speak freely but to take control of their own narrative and participate in movement building on the terms set by those narratives. In lieu of a sympathetic state that encourages / protects the spaces needed, this role must fall onto nascent movements. This is not something that can be adequately fulfilled by the workings of individual or small groups of civil society organisations. Likewise, the proliferation of alternative and semi-alternative media provides a basis for creating narratives and spaces for existing or marginalized narratives of being. The above again rely on civil society to take the burden for what should be the normative and transformative project of the state and the meta-narrative of accountability remains. The liberalism of the state has been undermined by its commitment to the Prevent programme and its failure to tackle Islamophobia and other forms of racism, and its undermining of the institutions and culture that hitherto provided some protection from and sent a normative signal about racism at the individual and structural level. The wider question of whether the abuses of minority rights, as well as the structural and individual violations of civil and political rights enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights by the praxis and increasingly the overt ideology of the state (under successive governments) cannot be solved within civil society.

Conclusions

Developing effective counter-narratives is essential in order to stem the tide of Islamophobia sweeping the nation.

To this end defensive reactions such as apologetics and/or reproducing cultural forms are not enough only end up perpetuating the problem because they reinforce the Islamophobic agenda being created by hate-inspired misrepresentation, misinformation and political expediency. To the contrary counter-narratives must reset the parameters of conversations about Islam and Muslims, unconditionally including Muslims in the national conversation on their own terms. The casting of Muslims as somehow living outside the idea of 'Britishness' needs to be challenged in a way that allows for a pluralistic conception of the term in opposition to the narrow and exclusivist conception that has gained traction in recent years. This cannot be achieved without a ditching of a governmental policy that has helped create and perpetuated a 'Muslim bogeyman' to sell unpopular anti-liberal and undemocratic policies at home and abroad.

It is also clear from the research that the way Islamophobia is understood on both a popular and official level needs to be revised. Islamophobia should properly relocate within epistemologies of anti-racism and equalities in order to prevent Islamophobic discourse from becoming mainstream and accepted practice. Islamophobia is and must be seen as part of the wider crisis of institutional racism in British society.

Counter-narratives must also challenge a media that is acknowledged as underpinning, reinforcing, (re)producing and normalizing anti-Muslim political and public discourse. The huge power imbalance between Muslim media and mainstream media means that there is no alternative to the integration of Muslims and Muslim activities into all aspects of coverage

and content. Mainstream media must recognise the existence and activities of Muslims as a group outside the normal reference points of 'otherisation'.

Two recurring concerns came across in this research. Firstly, a sense that engagement with government, media and other main institutions was in large part futile, and where warranted was to be done with little expectation of reciprocity. The narrowing of representations of Muslimness, the squeezing out of Muslims from public and political space by accusations of extremism and entryism, and the rising of a nationalistic and nativist discourse around Britishness that constructed its identity against various tropes of Muslimness, all served not simply as barriers to Muslim participation in the life of the nation, but as markers of expulsion of the Muslim subject from equality as citizens and protection from and equality before the law.

The second concern was that despite more than twenty years of conversations, research and advocacy on the issue of Islamophobia, not only was there little or no significant progress from institutions or the state in tackling the problem, there was a marked downward turn. Islamophobia in British society was universally considered to be normalized to the extent that the sense of hopelessness in mainstream institutions and the political process was in many cases directly a result of this normalization. The state had presided over and reproduced through various legal measures including but not solely anti-terrorism laws and policies a state of exception, wherein not only had a group of people been dehumanized enough to become a 'hated society' (Ameli, 2010) but that the process of creating 'hated societies' is one that is legitimized by the state. In this scenario where the legitimization of an 'environment of hate' has not only trumped internal and external perceptions of the UK as a multicultural state, but has become part of the fabric of a national story of what it means to be British. Not only is Britishness navigated through a denial of Muslimness, it is also represented through the articulation of supremacism as a normal facet of law and nation.

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