

**Oral Statement Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism 52nd Session Human Rights Council, 14 March 2023 Agenda Item 3, Promotion and protection of human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development**

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Islamic Human Rights Commission (IHRC) is a not-for-profit campaign, research and advocacy organisation founded and based in the United Kingdom. It was set up in 1997 and works for redress of human rights violations and a better understanding of rights and norms across confessional, ethnic, national, political and other boundaries.

IHRC has consultative status with the UN – ECOSOC.

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IHRC has strongly and repeatedly criticized over the years – but with no results, it has to be said - and in all relevant international fora, including the UN, the Prevent programme as part of the UK government's counter-terrorism strategy CONTEST.

Firstly, the Prevent programme is Islamophobic in its impact on Muslim communities and particularly harmful to Muslim individuals, school-aged children and adolescents who make up around half of all referrals. Secondly, it is discriminatory as it is built on a system of surveillance and preemptive intervention –albeit with no actual offence as its object - that depends on profiling. Thirdly, this profiling occurs through criteria that are in no way transparent. Indeed, the operation of Prevent is not made subject to evaluation according to the Public Sector Equalities Duty, a duty which the government has treated as discretionary since 2012. This means that Prevent both reinforces and perpetuates a broader institutional Islamophobia, while at the same time being unaccountable for doing so.

And what's worse, following the appointment of William Shawcross in January 2021 to lead Prevent's review that has been released recently, IHRC intends also express its concerns about the failure to have provided a proper, independent review of Prevent in the context of human rights. Far from being independent, in facts, the review is a reflection of Shawcross's own deep-rooted animus against Islam and Muslims, as widely shown in his publications and statements and previous work as Chair of the Charity Commission between 2012-2018.

As expected, William Shawcross' review into the UK Anti-terrorism Scheme Prevent has once again doubled down on problematising Islam and seeking to draw legitimate expressions of faith and faith-based views into the definition of terrorism. The review's call to reach further into so-called 'non-violent Islamist extremism' is nothing short of a call to criminalise mainstream Islam, especially where it informs political opinion that is hostile to establishment interests. The review should also be seen as an attack not just on Muslim civil society but civil society as a whole, restricting and constraining political debate and dissent further whilst maligning legitimate political critique using populist discourse

For all the above, IHRC calls on the UN to make every possible efforts to claim the withdrawal of Prevent programme on the grounds that it has proved ineffective, disproportionate and discriminatory, and to launch an extensive and adequate consultation process with all the NGOs, Civil Society Organizations and other relevant actors involved, with the purpose of carrying out a more inclusive, transparent and realistic review of the Prevent Programme, and other related measures in the framework of Counter-terrorism strategy.