



28th May 2024

MEDIA STATEMENT

Anti-Muslim prejudice during General Election campaigning must be condemned

Muslim Women's Network UK is alarmed that anti-Muslim and Islamophobic rhetoric is already emerging even though campaigning for the upcoming general elections have only just begun. On the Sky News Sunday Morning with Trevor Phillips, Nigel Farage claimed that Muslims in Britain do not subscribe to British values and 46% support Hamas. Such divisive language is dangerous and polarising and we know from experience that such irresponsible comments can lead to psychological and physical harm. As we have seen from recent incidents, Muslim women are most likely to bear the brunt of such misinformation.

Despite people of all faiths and none regularly attending protest marches calling for the Israeli government to stop the bombing, only Muslims are being associated with Hamas. The deliberate targeting and marginalisation of Muslims and spreading of misinformation is not only harmful to Muslims but also undermines the values of equality and justice that we, as a society, strive to uphold. Criticising Israeli military actions and the humanitarian impact on Palestinian civilians does not equate to supporting Hamas nor is it anti-Semitic. In fact, calling out human rights violations is not only a British value but a universal one. No single nation or culture holds a monopoly on values such as justice, equality, and human dignity. These principles are not the exclusive domain of any one country, including Britain. They are inherent to the human experience and embraced by cultures around the world.

Baroness Shaista Gohir OBE, CEO of MWN UK said: *"The escalating levels of anti-Muslim prejudice has already created an atmosphere of fear and anxiety within Muslim communities. In particular, many Muslim women feel less safe in their daily lives. I am therefore deeply disappointed that leading politicians have not called out Nigel Farage's comments, especially given that they tend to play a crucial role in shaping societal attitudes. Recent events have shown that there is much work to be done by the Conservative Party and the Labour Party to build trust with Muslim communities. It is therefore disappointing that neither major party has stepped forward to condemn Farage's comments, and reassure those communities that their safety matters."*

We hope that during the election campaigning, political parties will pledge their commitment to tackle Islamophobia, which must include reviewing funding to monitor anti-Muslim sentiments, prejudice and hate crimes. On 20th May, Baroness Gohir raised concerns in the House of Lords about anti-Muslim hate crime and the lack of transparency surrounding government funded Tell Mama and its data. Other peers including Baroness Warsi, Baroness Hussein-Ece and Baroness Uddin also raised similar concerns. We also urge that, after the elections, a cross-party working group is established to tackle anti-Muslim prejudice and all political parties commit to a zero-tolerance approach to all forms of discrimination and prejudice, irrespective of the targeted group.

Additional Information

•Media enquiries can be directed to: contact@mwnuk.co.uk or 0121 2369000

•Muslim Women's Network UK is a national charity and more information can be found on the website: www.mwnuk.co.uk

•MWN Helpline (national specialist faith and culturally sensitive helpline) can be contacted on:
Tel: 0800 999 5786 / Email: info@mwnhelpline.co.uk / Text: 07415 206 936 and further information can be found at: www.mwnhelpline.co.uk