



24 June 2024

MEDIA STATEMENT

Muslim Women's Manifesto – Levelling for Muslim Women

Muslim Women's Network UK has launched the Muslim Women's Manifesto calling for policies that will enhance safety, promote inclusion and demonstrate visible allyship. Muslim women want fair treatment and opportunities to improve their life chances. To ensure significant progress in levelling up for Muslim women, the next government must provide a better deal.

Muslim women make up one in three minority ethnic women and statistics show that they experience social disadvantage and receive unequal treatment which impacts on their wellbeing and life outcomes. Progress on equality for Muslim women has been too slow. In fact, anti-Muslim attitudes have intensified in public spaces, when accessing services, and in the work place. Muslim women can face multiple discrimination because of their sex, ethnicity and faith.

We therefore demand the following actions by the new government after 4th July 2024:

HATE CRIME AND DISCRIMINATION

- 1) Implementation of measures to improve the safety of Muslim women which include: campaigns to challenge negative attitudes and initiatives that will increase reporting of hate crime that involve women's groups such as creating women led hate crime reporting hubs.
- 2) Amendment of hate crime laws to close the current loophole so that it is a crime to incite racial and religious hatred even if individuals avoid using threatening or abusive language.
- 3) Strengthening of the Equality Act by enacting current provisions so that Muslim women are able to bring forward cases on intersectional discrimination i.e. when discrimination has taken place due to a combination of two or more relevant protected characteristics such as faith, ethnicity and sex.

VAWG

- 4) Hold an inquiry to find the factors contributing to the higher rates of domestic homicide rates of Black, Asian and minority ethnic women and make recommendations across government departments and sectors.
- 5) Tackle spiritual abuse by establishing a statutory definition, so that manipulation of religious influence by perpetrators is duly reflected in sentencing measures and to facilitate improved awareness of spiritual abuse within faith communities to better safeguard women and children.

- 6) Increase funding specialist VAWG funding generally, and make it available to minoritised women's groups by removing the current barriers to accessibility, such as high-income thresholds and requirement for resource intensive coalitions.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

- 7) Improve maternity safety for all women and in particular take steps to reduce the mortality rates of minority ethnic women and their babies by appointing an independent Maternity Commissioner, using disaggregated ethnicity data to better hold NHS Trusts to account, adapting maternity services and healthcare professional training to meet the needs of minority women and investing in maternal empowerment so minority ethnic women are better equipped to hold maternity care providers to account.
- 8) Increase early diagnosis of breast and gynaecological cancers among Black and South Asian women by increasing cancer screening rates, and increasing their awareness of symptoms and screening availability.
- 9) Increased access to specialist counselling services that meet the needs of Muslim women, especially for victims of abuse and for pregnant women and new mothers.

ECONOMIC INCLUSION

- 10) Improve Muslim women's access to training (such as financial literacy, confidence building, coaching, IT etc), volunteering, apprenticeships, carers support and employment including return to work programmes which are accessible for those who have been economically inactive for long periods due to caring responsibilities.

MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

- 11) Amend the Divorce (Religious Marriages) Act in 2002 so that it also includes Muslim women (in addition to the existing provision for Jewish women) so that the judge can withhold finalising the civil divorce until the woman receives her religious divorce (to help prevent undue pressure by husbands and Shariah Councils to agree to unreasonable and unfair financial and child custody demands).
- 12) Support the establishment of a self-regulating body and a code of practice for Shariah Councils that require best practices are adopted to safeguard women and eliminate discrimination.

You can download the Muslim Women's Manifesto here:

<https://www.mwnuk.co.uk/the-muslim-womens-manifesto>

Additional information

- Media enquiries can be directed to: contact@mwnuk.co.uk or 0121 2369000
- MWNUK is a national charity and more information can be found on the website: www.mwnuk.co.uk
- MWN Helpline can be contacted on: Tel: 0800 999 5786 / E: info@mwnhelpline.co.uk / Text: 07415 206 936 and further information can be found at: www.mwnhelpline.co.uk

