**Executive summary**

- The state has a duty to protect members of communities at the receiving end of hate. As the political climate currently stands, especially with regards to Muslims, the state falls into the trap of inadvertently fanning the flames of hate by adopting certain narratives which bolster the convictions of hate crime perpetrators that their deeds are warranted.

- Policies addressing hate crimes must take a community-specific, and non-uniformed approach. By this, it is meant that a “one shoe fits all” legislative model would be inadequate. Members of the various communities affected by hate crimes have very different experiences and needs, and therefore should be assisted by the police and support services to address such crimes. These initiatives should be developed in consultation with local community organisations with a track record of grassroots engagement. Similarly, motivations for hate crimes vary in each case, and so what may work for pre-emptively mitigating the likelihood of one community being victimised may not be applicable to another.

- The media plays a significant role, albeit subtle and nuanced, in perpetuating hate-fuelled narratives. Often, the freedom of the press and free speech is used as a cloak for inaccurate and irresponsible headlines. Many media monitors have noted the link between media discourse and that espoused by hate-crime perpetrators.

**Introduction**

We are a recently formed think tank that produces in-depth analysis and research on Muslims in Britain. We seek to redevelop policy and discourse to better reflect the academic research and literature on British Muslims. We produce contemporary and dynamic research which is underpinned by sociological and political science theories. By applying the social scientific approach, we aim to develop robust, detailed and valid data.

**Analysis**

1. In a multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-cultural society such as the UK, interactions with groups seen and designated as “different”, or “the other”, carries the risk of them being victimised on the grounds of such perceived difference.

2. “Hate” is a problem because it is a “direct attack on a victim’s sense of identity, one which they cannot and should not change” (Walters, 2013). Many victims of religiously motivated hate crimes, such as Mohammed Saleem from Birmingham, have been targeted because they manifested their identity – in Mr Saleem’s case, because he was visibly Muslim.

On the issue of the media:

3. The narrative put forward by many mainstream media outlets does little to distinguish between visible Muslims, like Mr Saleem, and those labelled as “terrorists”. There have been numerous instances where visibly practising one’s Muslim faith has been associated with “terror” and/or other grounds for concern by the mainstream media.

4. Muslims are often portrayed as one homogenous group who are thus seemingly interchangeable, and who all think in the same way – a way often posited as the alarming antithesis to the rest of British society. An example illustrating this is an article in a mainstream British newspaper from 23rd November 2015, where it was claimed that one in five British Muslims supported people who have gone to Syria to fight for Jihadi groups.
5. It has been noted that “as Muslims are demonised in dominant stereotypes, they become “the other” ...the alleged threat such groups pose can in turn lead to hostility...violence and hate” (Frost, 2007).

6. Perpetrators of anti-Muslim hate crimes are “often motivated by a negative view of Muslims they’ve acquired from reports and commentaries in the media”, and it is evident that those presenting and promulgating those views have been allowed to attack Muslims in ways that would be unacceptable, say, under the anti-racism rubric (Lambert and Githens-Mazer, 2010).

On the issue of the state’s duty to protect victimised communities:

7. One of the motivating factors behind anti-Muslim hate crime is said to result from political fears of Muslims as a security/terrorist threat (Copsey et al, 2013).

8. Political discourse does undoubtedly legitimise suspicion of certain groups. In 2005, Hazel Blears as the then-Minister of State for the Home Office said: “the fact that at the moment the threat is most likely to come from those people associated with an extreme form of Islam...inevitably means that some of our counter-terrorist powers will be disproportionately experienced by people in the Muslim community.”

9. Some academics have argued that targeting specific groups through counter-terror measures offer many in society “permission to hate” the “suspect community”, providing an ideological and moral license to anti-Muslim hate crime” (Poynting and Mason, 2006).

10. The Muslim Council of Britain has said how the past has proven that once a community is treated as “suspect” by the police, “the public are encouraged to do the same”; demarcating Muslims as a suspect community also serves to generate fear of them amongst wider society” (Pantazis and Pemberton, 2009).

11. Narratives which hold Muslims collectively responsible for atrocities have been adopted by perpetrators of anti-Muslim hate. The UK Monitoring Group found that in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, graffiti was scrawled on a mosque in the North of England which said “avenge USA and kill a Muslim now”, and within the first day of the London 7/7 attacks a schoolboy in Devon was assaulted and told it was “retribution for the bombings” (Poynting and Mason, 2006).

12. The above examples demonstrate how following any atrocity perpetrated by individuals who happen to be Muslim, considering the widely held hostile views towards Muslims in society already, the state will inevitably aggravate such anxieties. This paves the way for legitimising hate crimes, as such policies are capable of being construed as holding all Muslims responsible.

On the issue of a community-specific approach:

13. A response modelled on retributive justice alone is not capable of competently combating hate-motivated offences, in some instances. Such offences are rooted in ignorant and prejudicial views which manifest themselves in a detrimental manner against victims, lingering on long after the commission of the offence.

14. Studies have found that just as the majority of perpetrators of hate crimes generally are male, so too are the majority of victims (Perry, 2013). However, victims of anti-Muslim attacks are often women (Githens-Mazer and Lambert, 2010) who are readily identifiable due to their distinctive clothing. Some research has also unearthed how many Muslim women even gave up going into highly populated parts of their city because of the verbal and physical abuse they would have to endure if they wore a headscarf (Kundnani, 2002).
15. Different communities will have different needs, from the reporting of being victimised, to the immediate aftermath of being victimised, all the way through to the long-term support needed to overcome victimisation. For example, strained relationships between Muslims and the police can impact reporting levels – Tell MAMA found 63% didn’t report the incident to the police (Copsey et al, 2013), and the Islamic Human Rights Commission found that in some cases where victims reported their harassment to the police, they were told to “stay at home” (IHRC, 2002). In the case of the latter aforementioned example, in the absence of any other means of supporting the victim, serves to aggravate their exclusion from the rest of society.

**Recommendations**

16. For as long as groups continue to be designated as “the other”, whether through political or media narratives, they will be excluded from the realm of public sympathy. Groups, Muslims in particular, need to undergo a process of normalisation in the eyes of the public. We argue that the best way to do this is through increasing their representation in public life – whether that be through media, sports, or any other channel which the public come into constant contact with. Such representation will highlight the plurality that exists within such communities, and will inevitably lead to a greater likelihood of members of the public being able to relate to them, ultimately humanising them.

17. The disparity of rates of gender-based hate crime between different victimised communities conveys how a uniformed approach towards tackling hate is inadequate. There needs to be nuance, community-specific and community-pioneered initiatives. With regards to the issue of Muslim women taking off their hijab out of fear of further victimisation, this draws attention to the need for models based on restorative justice. Restorative justice methods will both educate the offender, and assist the healing process of the victim.

18. The media needs to be held accountable for the narratives they promulgate. Regulation of the media, with respect to the fear-mongering atmosphere some create at the expense of the safety and security of certain groups, is long overdue. The findings of Leveson, along with developing further accountability processes, need to be implemented.

19. It is important that a consistent approach is adopted by the government in engaging with legitimate, representative, Muslim organisations in order to address real fears within the community.

**References**


