

## Home Affairs Committee

### *The impact of official adoption of a definition of Islamophobia*

#### Submission of the For Britain Movement

##### Introduction

1. The For Britain Movement ('For Britain') is a political party founded in October 2017 and registered by the electoral commission in March 2018. Its founder and current leader is Anne Marie Waters.
2. On its website homepage the party introduces its core values as follows:

***"We are the common sense majority.***

*The For Britain Movement is a positive, pro-British, pro-democracy party, which believes in preserving the culture and values of the decent British majority, and passing these on to future generations.*

*We believe in the democratic mandate of the people, and therefore demand the UK's complete withdrawal from the European Union without further delay.*

*We believe in truth, justice, and freedom. We seek to create a Britain where the rule of law is upheld, and justice prevails over political convenience.*

*We will restore freedom of speech as the backbone of the democratic system.*

*We sit neither on the Left nor the Right, we are the decent, fair, common sense majority whose voice has been ignored for too long."*

3. The party's summary of its policies states, inter alia, that it stands for:
  - the sovereignty of the UK as an independent nation,
  - leaving the European Union without delay,
  - the British government prioritising the interest of the British people,
  - accountability in the provision of public services,
  - the democratic right to freedom of speech,
  - free and fair elections,
  - the equality of all citizens before one law, determined by parliament,
  - the preservation of traditional British liberties,
  - the liberty of all citizens to live privately without unnecessary state intrusion, and

- the defence of the rights of the individual to assent to, or reject, any philosophical, political, or religious belief system, without penalty.
4. None of the principles and policy objectives listed above could reasonably be considered especially controversial. The one issue concerning the party that does attract great hostility is our application of them to the teachings of Islam. The party's position on Islam is set out in a paper on the Policy page of the party's website. In summary, the For Britain Movement:
- i. seeks to draw the public's attention to the many unambiguous instructions contained in the Quran and words and actions attributed to Mohammed in the reports of his life, and reinforced by centuries of Islamic culture, that are inconsistent with the values of modern secular democracy;
  - ii. recognises the growth in numbers and influence of British Muslims who profess the aforesaid instructions as God's will and, in many cases, superseding the rule of law and democracy;
- and
- iii. promotes policies to reinforce British values, both directed at specific aspects of Islam, such as the banning of unnecessary face coverings in public and restrictions on sharia councils and Islamic faith schools; and also generally such as strengthening the legal protection given to free speech.

A fuller **Position Statement on Islam** is available on our website: [www.ForBritain.uk](http://www.ForBritain.uk).

5. One result of our willingness to criticise the teachings of Islam and aspects of Islamic culture is that For Britain has, from its outset, been routinely depicted by political opponents and the media as 'far right', 'racist' and 'Islamophobic'. The first of these terms is used extremely freely and is hardly ever defined, but in so far as we understand it to mean 'undemocratic and authoritarian' we consider it, like the slur 'racist', as the polar opposite of our party's purpose which is to protect democracy and equality under the law. It is to the third term, 'Islamophobia' with which this submission is directed.

## Islam

6. 'Islam' is a religious system of beliefs, values and instructions. A 'Muslim' is a follower of that religion. There is no substantial body of people that self-identify as Muslim who do not hold their identity as such to be defined by the statement of faith called the Shahada:

*'There is no god but God  
and Mohammed is His Messenger.'*

In practice, Muslims invariably interpret the second part of this credo as referring to a historical individual called Mohammed who lived in Arabia in the late sixth and early seventh century and who declared that he was receiving messages from God via the Angel Jibril (Gabriel). These revelations are believed to have been written down by his companions and now form the Quran. The Quran is often phrased so as to be understood as the voice of God speaking to Mohammed. The Quran also states, as though spoken by God, that Mohammed is '*a beautiful example*' for others to imitate.<sup>1</sup>

As a consequence, it is generally held that to be an orthodox Muslim is to believe:

- ❖ that the Quran is the direct word of God that all people are obliged to obey; and
- ❖ that in applying the Quran, Muslims are bound to follow Mohammed's example in so far as it can be discerned from the historical record.

7. The Quran contains variations of stories from the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament, the New Testament and from Arabic folklore. The verses that Mohammed is believed to have announced following his founding in Medina of an autonomous community set out specific laws dictating how the community of his followers should live (the *shariah*).

Many of these laws, as they are written in the Quran and as they were reportedly practised and preached by Mohammed, are inconsistent with the traditional British values of liberty, tolerance, and humane concern for others. These include:

- rules concerning the ownership of slaves and a statement that '*slavery is a blessing from God*'<sup>2</sup>
- the grant of permission, stated in the Quran no less than four times, for Muslim men to have sex with '*those whom their right hand possesses*' (usually interpreted as personal slaves or captives taken as the spoils of war)<sup>3</sup>;
- a system of marriage and inheritance laws in which women consistently receive inferior rights to men, including a Muslim man's right to have up to four wives whom he may divorce at will and strike for disobedience; and detailed rules specifying that a woman should receive half the inheritance of her brothers and that her testimony either be disregarded or counted as half that of a man,<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Quran 33.26

<sup>2</sup> 16.71.

<sup>3</sup> 4.24; 23.1-7; 33.50 and 70.29-30.

<sup>4</sup> 4.3; 2.228; 4.34; 4.11 and 4.176.

- provisions for the divorce (and by necessary implication the marriage) of girls who have not yet had their first period<sup>5</sup>;
- the telling of a story in which a servant of God killed a boy to prevent him falling into disbelief and thereby bringing dishonour on his parents; <sup>6</sup> and
- laws prohibiting sexual freedom including the strong condemnation of homosexuality.<sup>7</sup>

The Quran supports its instructions with graphic depictions of sensual pleasures in paradise for those who obey its instructions, and gruesome torments of hell to be suffered by those who disbelieve. It also prescribed sanctions for breaching these laws here on earth, that Muslims are bound to apply if it is possible so to do. These invariably consist of severe physical punishments and include whipping, beheading, amputation, confinement until death and crucifixion.<sup>8</sup> Mohammed is believed to have added stoning to death to this list of sanctions.

8. The Quran describes disbelievers in it as God's word as '*the worst of creatures*' and '*further astray than cattle*' and advises Muslims (ten times) not to take disbelievers as friends and (twice) to operate a double standard: to '*be harsh to disbelievers, merciful to one another*' <sup>9</sup>

Mohammed announced well over a hundred and fifty instructions from God to his followers that they support him in his conflict ( *jihad* ) with the Meccans and, following his conquest of Mecca, in other campaigns throughout and beyond Arabia. Several reasons are offered for the call to violent jihad. It is explained as retribution on the Meccans for their rejection of Mohammed; a test for the believers; a demonstration of God's power; or the promise of booty including the enslavement of their enemies as a reward from God. However, by far the most commonly cited justification for  *jihad*  is that disbelievers, by rejecting Mohammed, have opposed God.<sup>10</sup>

9. The orthodox account of the life of Mohammed, as unquestioningly accepted by Muslims over the past fourteen centuries depict him engaging in:
  - robbery of Meccan caravans and raids on tribes that had shown him no ill-will;
  - owning and selling slaves and enslaving people who had until then been free;
  - authorising his fighters to rape their female captives;

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<sup>5</sup> 65.4-5.

<sup>6</sup> 18.65-82;

<sup>7</sup> Sentences for fornication/adultery: 4.15-6 (confinement until death) and 24.2-4 (whipping). Condemnation of homosexuality: 7.80-84; 26.160-172; 27.54-58 and 29.28.

<sup>8</sup> 4.15; 5.32-33; 5.38 and 24.2-4.

<sup>9</sup> '*Worst of creatures*': 8.55, 98.6; '*Further astray than cattle*': 7.179; '*Not to take unbelievers as friends*': 3.28; 8.72-3; 4.88-9; 4.139; 4.144; 5.51-2; 5.57; 60.1-4 and 80-1; and double standard for believers/disbelievers: 5.54 and 48.29.

<sup>10</sup> 8.13.

- torturing prisoners;
- ordering the killing of poets and singers who had mocked him;
- ordering the stoning to death of adulterers;
- on one occasion, massacring all the several hundred men of a Jewish tribe, the Banu Qurayza who had surrendered to him, and enslaving and selling their widows and children.

### The importance of the right to challenge Islam

10. According to the national census, the number of Muslims in the UK is substantial and rising rapidly.

*% Muslim population in UK over recent censuses*

Census year	Number of Muslims in the UK	Muslims as a % of UK population
1961	50,000	0.1
1971	226,000	0.5
1981	553,000	1.1
1991	950,000	1.9
2001	1.6 million	3.1
2011	2.7 million	4.8

11. This Muslim population is predominately located in London, Bradford, Birmingham and a number of towns, mostly in the north of England.

*% Muslim population in four cities with largest Muslim populations*

	2001	2011
London	8.4	12.4
Manchester	9.1	15.8
Birmingham	14.3	21.8
Bradford	16.1	24.7

Consequently, it appears all but avoidable that several towns and cities will have Muslim majority populations within twenty to thirty years, and that within the lifetime of people alive now the UK may itself become a Muslim-majority country.

12. The final report of the **Casey Review: A review into opportunity and integration** (2017) chaired by Dame Louise Casey, DBE, CB, expressed grave concerns at the isolated nature of some Islamic communities in the UK (mainly England).

*“People of Pakistani and Bangladeshi ethnicity tend to live in more residentially segregated communities than other ethnic minority groups ... Blackburn, Birmingham, Burnley and Bradford all include wards with between 70 and 85% Muslim populations...”<sup>11</sup>*

In one passage that was widely reported at the time of the report’s publication, Dame Casey wrote:

*“Taken together, high ethnic minority concentration in residential areas and in schools increases the likelihood of children growing up without meeting or better understanding people from different backgrounds. One striking illustration of such segregation came from a non-faith state secondary school we visited where, in a survey they had conducted, pupils believed the population of Britain to be between 50% and 90% Asian, such had been their experience up to that point.”<sup>12</sup>*

Factors that led to this were identified as including an extremely high level of consanguineous and transnational marriages resulting in the phenomenon of what Dame Casey called ‘a first generation in every generation’.

13. In the **2016-17 Ofsted Annual Report**, Amanda Spielman warned:

*Tensions between belief systems and British values create a motivation for some communities to try avoiding the educational and safeguarding standards that are expected of schools. While this manifests itself in different ways, the root cause is the same. This matters, because the British values of democracy, tolerance, individual liberty, mutual respect and the rule of law are the principles that keep society free from the radical and extreme views that can often lead to violence*

It is believed that this was clearly directed at including Islamic communities.

14. Abroad, Islam plays a hugely important political role in all Muslim majority nations. Many such countries operate aspects of their legal systems in accordance with the instructions contained in the Quran. Others are deeply destabilised by terrorist groups attempting to impose such laws. There is no Muslim majority country, anywhere in the world, in which its citizens enjoy a high level of personal freedom, protected by the rule of law and democracy. Many give inferior rights to women and criminalise homosexuality explicitly in the name of applying Islamic principles. Increasingly any non-Islamic places of worship is vulnerable to being attacked and their congregations persecuted.

15. In particular, it should be noted that more than half of all British Muslims are of Pakistani or Bangladeshi heritage. Pakistan, originally including Bangladesh, originally came into existence precisely to create a country founded and governed in accordance with the

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<sup>11</sup> 1.30

<sup>12</sup> 1.37

principles of Islam and today both offer particularly egregious examples of countries with appalling rights for women, homosexuals and non-Muslims.

16. Clearly the instructions of the Quran and example of the recorded life of Mohammed described above would, in so far as they are followed literally, involve regressive practices that are wholly inconsistent with the British values of individual liberty and tolerance.

Whilst it is accepted that the vast majority of British Muslims are peaceful and law abiding, it would be fanciful to suggest that, as the Muslim population grows, the above teachings of Islam will not have a profound impact upon life in Britain.

It is submitted that a robust national discussion of the teachings of Islam and their effect upon life in Britain, including allowing for their criticism and challenge, is of the greatest public interest, in the interests of preserving traditional British values of liberty and tolerance.

#### **Definitions of 'Islamophobia'**

17. Although older usages of the word 'Islamophobia' can be found, its current popular usage is commonly attributed to The Runnymede Trust's 1997 report *Islamophobia, a challenge for us all*. This report summarises the meaning of Islamophobia as:

*"Unfounded hostility towards Islam.*

*It also refers to the practical consequences of such hostility in unfair discrimination against Muslim individuals and communities, and to the exclusion of Muslims from mainstream political and social affairs"*

It is noteworthy that the report at no stage uses the words 'Quran', 'Mohammed' or 'Sharia' and as a result deal with 'Islam' in an entirely abstract way, without ever identifying what Islam actually is.

18. It is submitted that, setting aside for the moment, criticisms of the word 'Islamophobia', this definition conflates three entirely separate phenomena:

- i. Unfounded hostility to Islam,
- ii. unfair discrimination against Muslims, and
- iii. exclusion of Muslims from mainstream political and social affairs'

It is suggested that the word 'unfounded', whilst clear, is hopelessly subjective and incapable of being applied fairly in a policy or regulatory context.

Moreover, the definition seems to be deliberately drafted to conflate hostility to a teaching contained in the Quran, with advocating discrimination against Muslims in general and seeking their exclusion from mainstream political and social affairs. Indeed, the desire by many critics of Islam to have the teachings of Islam robustly discussed is itself an attempt to engage Muslims into 'mainstream social political affairs': it is the consequence of shielding Muslims from having their beliefs challenged to keep them in a distinct 'protected' category, isolated from the free public exchange of ideas.

This report then presented eight pairs characterisations of beliefs about Islam that it described as either 'closed', if a belief is critical of Islam, or 'open' if it is unquestioningly positive. These characterisations of 'open' and 'closed' ideas are in fact the opposite of what they purport to be and amount to mere propaganda for the Panglossian acceptance of any idea that is presented as being Islamic.

19. In November 2017 the Runnymede Trust issued a 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary report, ***Islamophobia, still a challenge to us all*** to "look at how the phenomenon has evolved over the past 20 years, and how it manifests itself today". In this new report they described the position of Muslims in Britain as having become more complex in the time that had passed since the earlier report.

20. Unlike the 1997 report, the 2017 report seems to acknowledge the theoretical permissibility of criticising the teachings of Islam, although like the earlier report it contains no reference to the Quran or Mohammed. Whilst briefly conceding that it may be possible to make legitimate criticisms of Islam as a value system, the report writers seem to consider protecting the actual right to do so as subordinate to the overriding imperative of discouraging such criticism in the real world.

*"Many have argued that Islam as a religion is a system of beliefs, and so can and should be subject to criticism. We don't object to that formulation.*

*At the same time, many who affirm their right to criticize Islam as a religion don't consider enough how Muslims do indeed face discrimination and prejudice that has real effects in their lives – from the labour market to educational outcomes to violence in the street. Runnymede believes the focus on ideas (or 'ideologies') has obscured what instead should be a focus on people."*<sup>13</sup>

21. The report proposed two new definitions of Islamophobia proposed new definitions: a short definition:

*"Islamophobia is anti-Muslim racism."*

and a longer form definition:



*“Islamophobia is any distinction, exclusion or restriction towards, or preference against, Muslims (or those perceived to be Muslims) that has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.”*

The report is unashamed at *‘raceing Islamophobia’* (the title of the report’s chapter 2), and also *‘(de)culturing Islamophobia’*.

22. As a stand-alone definition, the shorter definition above is self-contradictory, for the reason that Islam is not a race (or similar innate characteristic such as ethnicity, nationality, cultural heritage, caste, tribe or skin tone). To counter this obvious objection, the report explains that its proposed definition relies upon an acceptance that ‘racism’ need not refer to hostility based upon a person’s victim’s actual or perceived ethnicity, but to the hostility’s traceable roots in a distinct social phenomenon:

*“As Nasar Meer (2013) has powerfully argued, the Muslim presence in Britain has long been seen as unwelcome and problematic – a perception predating, in fact, modern ideas of biological racism and running in parallel with long historical antisemitic antecedents, which have pathologized and persecuted religious difference marked through descent, ‘race’ and ‘culture’.”*

The report presents no evidence that this understanding of ‘racism’ has wide acceptance in society, and it is suggested that this is not the case. The problems of defining a neologism with further neologisms; and of redefining the ambit of terms that are well understood as rooted in real-world phenomena, specifically so that they can incorporate matters that the public would not normally regard them as including, is that the terms become detached from reality and popular usage and lose any authentic meaning.

23. It is also to be noted that qualifying words such as ‘unfounded’ or ‘unfair’ present in the first Runnymede Trust definition of Islamophobia are absent from the later one which includes any action that has the ‘effect’ of *‘impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing’* of ‘Muslims’. This definition is so broad that it would outlaw the criticism of any practice, however regressive or unjust by standards of modern secular society, that was justified by the Quran or Islamic tradition.
24. The All-Party Parliamentary Group on British Muslims report ***Islamophobia Defined*** shared with ***Islamophobia, still a challenge to us all*** the explicit attempt to equate criticism of Islam with racism. In its attempt to justify the connection they relied upon a further neologism ‘Muslimness’:

*Islamophobia is rooted in racism and is a type of racism that targets expressions of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness.*

25. It is readily observable that throughout the report the word ‘Muslimness’, which is often used in the phrase ‘expressions of ‘Muslimness’ appears in inverted commas in order to indicate that it is a word being used with a technical, unfamiliar meaning, and yet is introduced without explanation and is never explained. The only exposition appears on page 49:

*“As Professor Salman Sayyid and Abdoolkarim Vakil argue, “Muslimness, like Jewishness or Englishness in common expression. It describes not so much any person or actual group than a family of overlapping and flexible features by which in a given situation something is seen as having the quality of being Muslim. Such features can range from the names people use to the clothes they wear, from the languages they speak to the foods they eat – or don’t eat. These features are not fixed but rather historical and contextual – some are long enduring, others more recent.” [sic]*

The term ‘Muslimness’ is clearly used as a substitute term for Islam in this definition in order to blur the meaning of ‘Islam’ within the term Islamophobia. By this legerdemain, a person’s adherence to the Quran’s encouragement that a man should beat his wife for disobedience or its instructions to kill idolators and homosexuals are equated with a person inheriting the surname Khan from their parents or eating Middle Eastern food. All are manifestations of ‘Muslimness’ and under this definition any person who challenges the reasons for the former, violently intolerant but specifically Islamic, behaviour is automatically lumped together with racism based upon the latter entirely value-neutral characteristics.

### **Phobia**

26. The word ‘phobia’ is a medical term relating to an involuntary fear or aversion. As such it is a type of mental disorder.
27. It should be clearly recognised as inappropriate for any person, in any circumstances, to make sweeping accusations against the mental health of those who pursue an argument with which they disagree or which they find to be inconvenient. Such terminology seems specifically designed to prevent the resolution of any issues of contention in a peaceful and civilised manner. It is also, of course, insulting to those people unfortunate enough to suffer from real phobias. The proposed use of the term ‘Islamophobia’ is in fact a pernicious form of hate speech, projecting the accusation of irrational hostility, using the trope of a person suffering mental disorder, onto a person with whom one disagrees.

### **Conclusion**

28. All of the spawning Newspeak vocabulary, such as 'Islamophobia', 'raceing', '(de)culturing' and 'Muslimness', outlined above represents more than mere inapt use of the English language. True to Orwell's concept, the promotion of the word 'Islamophobia' is clearly designed to avoid people speaking, and by so doing ultimately to prevent people thinking, the inconvenient truth that in the UK and around the world, many acts of intolerance, not to say barbaric cruelty, are being committed by Muslims sincerely following the unambiguous teaching of the Quran and the example of Mohammed.

Use of such words to deny the link between Islam and Islam-inspired intolerance is more insidious than merely a decision to see no evil or avoid a thorny issue. It appears to give official support to the narrative that there is no such link and that those who challenge the values of the Quran, even using the most moderate language and explicitly in the name of liberty and democracy, can only be irrational and themselves motivated by intolerance and 'hate'.

29. It is in the interests of all UK citizens that the UK remains a country in which all can live together in peace. The lesson of the past four hundred years of British history is that peace comes only from a rule of law that respects the individual's freedom to live, express themselves and worship or not, as they see fit, and a democratic culture in which communities integrate and share decision making rather than progress, or not, in separate, parallel worlds. Social harmony can never be based upon empowering people sympathetic to one tradition to silence its critics and malign views that they do not wish to be expressed.
30. The word 'Islamophobia' has no legitimate use. It is suggested that its use be abandoned immediately.

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