

# UK Muslims demand investigation of Conservative Party's Islamophobia

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The Muslim Engagement and Development NGO (MEND) is the latest group to formally request that the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) investigate Islamophobia within the Conservative Party. It cited a report detailing more than 120 incidents of Islamophobia in the last five years emanating from over 60 Conservative Members of Parliament, councillors and party candidates.

This follows a series of formal complaints by groups, including the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB), over Islamophobia in the Tory Party that have been met with a muted response in the media. This contrasts starkly with the fraudulent campaign launched by right-wing Labourites, the Tories, the corporate-controlled media and the BBC, orchestrated by the US, Israel and Britain's military and intelligence apparatus, against Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn and the left over anti-Semitism.

Leading the disgusting racist attacks on Muslims has been Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who has singled out and attacked Muslim women and readily readmitted people to the party who have actively endorsed Islamophobic tropes. MEND's report, From 'Letterboxes' to 'Ragheads,' cites multiple examples emanating from Johnson, including that:

- "Islam is the problem" and "fear of Islam—seems a natural reaction" and Islam was "the most viciously sectarian of all religions in its heartlessness towards unbelievers," in a piece in the Conservative magazine *Spectator* after the 7/7 London terrorist attacks in 2005.

- Tony Blair "is shortly off to the Congo. No doubt the AK47s will fall silent, and the pangas will stop their hacking of human flesh, and the tribal warriors will all break out in watermelon smiles to see the big white chief touch down in his big white British taxpayer-funded bird."

- The Queen loves touring the Commonwealth because of the "cheering crowds of flag-waving piccaninnies."

- "[F]or 10 years we in the Tory Party have become used to Papua New Guinea-style orgies of cannibalism and chief-killing."

- Veiled Muslim women looked like "bank robbers" and "letter boxes."

- "We should forbid the imams from preaching sermons in anything but English" and that British Muslims were part of a "multicultural apartheid," in a piece in the *Telegraph*.

Johnson put racism and Islamophobia at the heart of his election campaign, pitting Indian Hindu voters against Pakistani Muslim voters, over the fate of Kashmir in particular, to the extent that his populist right-wing rhetoric saw even former colleagues accusing him of "inciting violence."

Last May, the Muslim Council of Britain, an umbrella organization of more than 500 member associations, filed a complaint with the EHRC over Islamophobia within the Conservative Party. It noted that the party's debating forums were riddled with racist comments, with many members and officials engaging in Islamophobia.

One of the most notorious incidents involved Zac Goldsmith, a former MP and a member of Johnson's inner circle, who during his campaign to be mayor of London, viciously attacked Sadiq Khan as a Muslim extremist, for which he never apologized.

The party took no action against Goldsmith or MPs, councillors or candidates running for election who whipped up Islamophobia. To cite a few examples:

Bob Blackman, the Tory MP for Harrow East, was not sanctioned for sharing anti-Muslim social media posts by former leader of the English Defence League Tommy Robinson. Neither was Nadine Dorries, a Tory minister who has endorsed Robinson.

The Tory Party only suspended 15 councillors pending an investigation after they (and 10 others) were shown to have posted the Islamophobic and racist material on social

media. One had called Muslims the “enemy within,” while another wanted to ban mosques and a third called London’s mayor Sadiq Khan a “vile creature.”

According to a YouGov poll published earlier this year, two-thirds of Tory members believe that parts of Britain operate under sharia law, while almost half of Tories believe in the myth of no-go zones where “non-Muslims are not able to enter” and that Islam is a threat to “the British way of life.” Another 39 percent think Islamist terror attacks “reflected widespread hostility to Britain among the Muslim community.”

All the evidence suggests that Islamophobia is entrenched and widespread among the Tories, whose rampant racism extends to anti-Semitism as well, with three Tory candidates in last month’s election being investigated for their views.

The Muslim Council of Britain notes that the party’s complaints procedures are anything but transparent and those in charge of the process have handled complaints in a callous manner.

Former Tory chairman Brandon Lewis denied that Islamophobia was an issue, while Jacob Rees-Mogg, Leader of the House of Commons and Lord President of the Council, and Tom Tugendhat, an MP and lieutenant Colonel in the Territorial Army, both claim the party has handled the issue well.

Others have gone even further, with Rod Liddle writing in the *Spectator*, “My own view is that there is not nearly enough Islamophobia within the Tory party,” and adding, “Phobia implies these misgivings are irrational, when they are anything but.”

Following the Tories’ election victory, the Muslim Council of Britain urged Johnson to reassure the Muslim community, which was now fearful for its future, and “heal the country and bring communities together.” Harun Khan, the MCB’s secretary-general, said, “Mr. Johnson commands a majority, but there is a palpable sense of fear amongst Muslim communities around the country.” He added, “We entered the election campaign period with longstanding concerns about bigotry in our politics and our governing party. Now we worry that Islamophobia is ‘oven-ready’ for government.”

British Muslim journalist Mehdi Hassan echoed this, tweeting that it was a “dark day” for minorities in Britain.

So deeply entrenched is Islamophobia that even former Tory Party chairperson and cabinet minister Baroness Sayeeda Warsi declared that it had “passed the dinner-table test,” meaning it had become widely tolerated and acceptable. She said that the party “must start healing its

relationship with British Muslims.”

Warsi called Johnson’s endorsement from far-right figures Tommy Robinson and Katie Hopkins and the Tories’ retweeting of the statements “deeply disturbing.” She said, “The battle to root out racism must now intensify” and called for an independent inquiry into Islamophobia.

Health Secretary Matthew Hancock dismissed her remarks, saying, “There are others who take a more balanced view.”

Despite having promised an independent investigation into Islamophobia during his leadership campaign, Johnson abandoned his pledge once he became prime minister. During the election campaign, cabinet minister and key Johnson ally Michael Gove told the BBC’s “Today” programme that the party would mount an independent inquiry before the end of the year. But once again Johnson backtracked, promising an internal investigation that would look at all discrimination, not specifically Islamophobia.

The MCB expressed its concern, saying that broadening the investigation’s remit was designed to bury the real problem and was part of the party’s “denial, dismissal and deceit” regarding Islamophobia.

About half of all hate crimes against religious groups were committed against Muslims between 2018 and 2019, while in-person hate crimes against Muslims from 2016 to 2017 increased by 30 percent. “Punish a Muslim Day” letters were sent to Muslim MPs and families around London, while mosques have been attacked, including when a van ploughed into a group of pedestrians who had been worshipping at a London mosque in June 2017.

These hate crimes, and their tacit support from the top echelons of the political establishment, have a definite logic. Britain’s security services have already warned the public that the far-right has attempted—and failed—to carry out attacks similar to that in New Zealand, even amassing and stockpiling equipment to bomb a mosque, with one-third of terrorist plots in Britain since March 2017 coming from the far-right, arguably more energized by anti-Muslim bigotry than anything else.



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