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A Feasibility Study/Proposal for an Islamophobia Response Resource



**THE
Sun**

Monday, January 29, 2007

Islam kids 'reject UK'



Daily Mail

MONDAY JANUARY 29TH 2007

**'A GENERATION OF OUTSIDERS'
'Multiculturalism 'drives young Muslims to
shun British values'**



Evening Standard

London, Monday 29.01.07

'I would like Sharia law in this country'



**DAILY
STAR**

Monday January 29th 2007

**BRIT MUSLIMS WANT THE STONE AGE
Death is okay for traitors**



THE TIMES

MONDAY JANUARY 29th 2007

**'Extreme youth: the Muslims who would swap British
law for Sharia'**

Islamophobia Media Monitoring & Response Agency

IMMRA

Islamophobia – a major new phenomenon

A major survey carried out in the UK last autumn concluded that over 50% of Britons thought Islam posed a threat to Western Liberal Democracy.¹

The impact of the resultant negative media on the Muslim Community was made clear from another poll conducted by ICM commissioned by the Guardian Newspaper following the July bombings in 2005 which found that:

“Nearly two-thirds of Muslims told pollsters that they had thought about their future in Britain after the attacks, with 63% saying they had considered whether they wanted to remain in the UK. Older Muslims were more uneasy about their future, with 67% of those 35 or over having contemplated their future home country compared to 61% among those 34 or under.”

Following the Danish Cartoon controversy Journalist/Author - Harsha Walia assessed rather succinctly the role of the media in stirring up an Islamophobic atmosphere:

“For example, the dominant media representation surrounding the Danish cartoon controversy is, unsurprisingly, of the stereotypical irrational, uncivilized, frothing Muslim mobster. Even the terminology used such as “rioters” invokes images of senseless people gone wild, much like the media response to the Paris riots. The controversy over these cartoons is also dominating posts in the blogosphere, with emphatic calls to “Free the West!”, slanderous rhetoric such as “Welcome to the multicultural society. We let in the bigots, anti-Semites, homophobes and religious lunatics”, and images of veiled women with the caption “What is more obscene? Depicting the Prophet in cartoons or forcing girls and women to live like this in the name of the Prophet?”

¹ Daily telegraph You Gov Poll August 2006¹

*The media is increasingly becoming an agent for the communication of societal values. Those who control media are powerful because they are able to control the construction of representations and hence, of what is real. In a world of media spin-doctors, our awkward embrace of an ideal of objectivity can make us passive recipients of the news rather than aggressive analyzers of the inherent biases within it. So let us be clear that the Western media has predominantly used this religious doctrinal explanation- that the Prophet is not supposed to be pictorially depicted- not in an effort to offer a respectful and educational explanation to non-believers; rather it is used to suggest the rigidity and intolerance of the Muslim community in what has been dubbed the “clash of values- freedom of religion versus freedom of expression.”*²

This ‘clash of values’ theme was rolled out again at the end of January this year with the publication by ‘Policy Exchange’ - a Conservative Party Think Tank of “Uniting the Country: Interim Report on National Cohesion” which was published rather coincidentally at the same time as Conservative Party leader - David Cameron made a public speech stating *‘that separatist Muslims who promote Shariah law and demand special treatment for their faith are the "mirror image" of the British National party’*

The report argued that the principal Muslim Community organisations in the UK support an ideology which is counter to the concept of integration, promotes separation, discrimination against women and aspires to impose the extremes of Shariah law in the West.³ The headlines in the British Press which followed underlined the Islamophobic thrust of the report.

Headlines

Monday 29 January

The Sun
Islam kids 'reject UK'

The Evening Standard
'I would like Sharia law in this country'

Daily Mail
A GENERATION OF OUTSIDERS; Multiculturalism 'drives young Muslims to shun British values'

The Times
Extreme youth: the Muslims who would swap British law for Sharia

The Mirror
YOUNGER MUSLIMS 'RADICAL'

² Harsha Walia, February 06, 2006 'The Row over the Danish Cartoons'

³ Pauline Neville Jones Report /Conservative Policy Review 'Uniting the Country'

The Independent
Young Muslims 'more militant'

The Express
**Muslim youth who want Islamic rule in Britain;
Poll reveals young want sharia law 1 in 8 admires terror groups like al Qaeda**

Daily Star
**BRIT MUSLIMS WANT THE STONE AGE;
Death is okay for traitors**

The Daily Telegraph
'One in eight admires al-Qa'eda' '40% want Sharia law in Britain'

The harsh Islamophobic picture in the UK is echoed across the Pond in the US where recent polls noted that over 25% of Americans regard Islam as a religion of hatred and violence.⁴

The results of Islamophobia - Muslims, The New Suspect Community!

Since the beginning of the war on terror post 9/11, UK and International Muslims has been the target of repressive legislation – leading to the unprecedented erosion of Human Rights. These include the introduction of archaic and inhuman - ‘Control Orders’ and arbitrary detention without trial which despite an initial condemnation by senior members of the judiciary and the House of Lords, have now become publicly accepted practice. Over 1000 UK Muslims have been arrested, detained and along with the entire Muslim community, subjected to a process of media humiliation and collective blame. The result of this crude process being ironically, that in all but a handful of cases those arrested have subsequently been released without charge. Muslims both in Britain and internationally have now without doubt, become the new ‘Suspect Community’ - fuelled by outrageous and sensational newspaper headlines and the development of an ‘official discourse’ designed to undermine the major Muslim community leaders; Muslim umbrella organisations and to fracture and destabilise the Muslim community at large.

⁴ Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR) Survey March 2006 ‘American Public Opinion about Islam & Muslims

Countering the Threat of Islamophobia

There must be a four pronged process to deal with the very serious threat of Islamophobia. These four components will be delivered through four separate units which will fall under the umbrella of IMMRA and which will be vital to ensure that a meaningful response facility is in place to counter Islamophobia in the UK and overseas. They are as follows:

- Media, Academic & Government legislation/Publications Monitoring Unit
- Public Relations/Media & Legal Response Unit
- Muslim polling Agency
- A (Muslim Friendly) Think Tank

Media, Academic & Government Legislation/Publications Monitoring Unit

It is important that a robust monitoring unit is established which is able to scrutinise media output daily in broadcast and print media as well as academic and government publications - in the UK and overseas. It is crucial that the unit is equipped to monitor and expose parliamentary proposals and proposed government legislation which may impact adversely on the Muslim Community. Similarly, it is important that the unit is able to monitor academic publications and presentations and to provide an alert and an effective rebuttal to adverse material. The monitoring unit should be adequately resourced to be able to monitor material published in all of the principal languages.

It should be noted for example that whilst the Danish Media is responsible for generating a regular flow of controversial and Islamophobic material and its government responsible for introducing a series of repressive measures targeting Danish Muslims, it is rare that news of this is picked up in the UK media – mostly due to the fact that it is not published in English.

IMMRA will provide a full monitoring resource which will include personnel who have international media access and can provide adequate translation services. The nature and diversity of modern media means that it is delivered 24/7 in many different formats. With this in mind, it is crucial that we have sufficient resources and trained personnel to provide adequate scrutiny.

IMMRA proposes to engage three dedicated full time multi-lingual personnel with appropriate research and academic backgrounds. It will also develop a network of volunteers from within Muslim umbrella organisations; universities and other sympathetic bodies which can provide a vital secondary resource for scrutiny and reporting. The monitoring unit will also be responsible for maintaining a regularly updated internet website and for publishing regular reports in an academic format.

Islamophobia – Public Relations/Media & Legal Response (PRMLR) Unit

Most News and Current affairs Editors will argue that they have a duty to respond to the representations and complaints of their viewers/readers/listeners and it follows that if there are few or no representations or complaints, editors do not feel that they have a need to exercise caution in the choice of news stories or headlines.

The current climate of Islamophobia – the consistent attacks against the Muslim Community generally and its leadership more specifically, more than ever highlight the need to establish a dedicated Public Relations/Media & Legal Response Unit. This agency should be fully resourced and able to both respond to Islamophobic press/media coverage and to preempt and mitigate initiatives which impact on the Muslim Community. The agency would vigorously cultivate contacts within mainstream media – home affairs correspondents/journalists; current affairs presenters and also develop key relationships within government circles – MPs and cabinet ministers/advisors etc. Its purpose will be to ensure that positive media coverage is regularly achieved as it relates to the Muslim Community and its leadership. It shall also provide a staunch legal rebuttal mechanism to allegations and defamation etc. Crucially it is important for this agency to build up a network of intelligence gathering mechanisms.

To achieve this, IMMRA will source a team of sympathetic freelance Muslim/Muslim sympathetic journalists who can produce regular, informed and challenging rebuttal and material which promotes positive Islamic values. These journalists will need to be paid professional rates where necessary in order to ensure that good quality, publishable material is regularly generated. Additionally IMMRA shall develop a team of Muslim/Muslim friendly legal practitioners who can effectively respond to cases of libel and defamation etc. against individuals and organisations within the Muslim community.

A crucial function of the PRML Unit will also be to provide a steady stream of important information; statistics and poll data to key centres of influence – parliamentary members; government ministers and peers; political commentators and members of academia. To achieve this effectively IMMRA proposes to establish a polling resource.

A Definitive & Credible Muslim Polling Agency

The Polling resource will regularly deliver objective, balanced; quantified and qualified data to initially feed into regular definitive reports on Muslim attitudes to respond to the weight of regular attacks and statements by senior politicians which continue to feature in the mainstream media. The establishment of the new polling agency should recognise the many polls conducted over the last few months which have been commissioned and led by those who seek to distort the facts about the Muslim Community as part of a political agenda. The new agency should poll a much larger than normal grouping of UK based Muslims (traditional polls are usually based on information derived from approximately 1,000 respondents). It was suggested that the grouping should be as large as 5,000 with proportional demographic referencing – age; sex; geographical location and social status.

IMMRA has access to a database of over 1,000,000 UK Muslims and has negotiated terms to establish the equivalent of a Muslim BARB panel – the members of which can be approached by phone within hours to obtain a definitive and accurate Muslim viewpoint/response to unfolding political events; comments by government/prime ministers, international statesman and senior religious figures (such as the Pope).

IMMRA proposes to recruit and train a polling team of 20 telephone pollsters – who will be available to conduct polls from a dedicated calling centre. IMMRA shall also source and employ a ‘Polling Centre Coordinator - Director’ - who will need to be an established statistician/analyst with a track record in poll construction, management and appraisal. The Coordinator will be responsible for designing, managing and analysing the polls and for producing associated poll studies/reports to be distributed throughout the media and government. It is expected that such definitive poll data will continually have the ability to set the news agendas of the day.

The Establishment of a New (Muslim Friendly) Think Tank

IMMRA recognises the impact of reports/research which comes from credible established Think Tanks such as Chatham House; Adam Smith Institute; Institute for Public Policy Research; DEMOS and Policy Exchange. Reports from such bodies have a huge impact on defining the official discourse of government and the media. Far too often such reports have been detrimental to the Muslim community as they have been commissioned with a preconceived agenda to undermine what is referred to as ‘Political Islam’.

IMMRA proposes to constitute a new (Muslim Friendly) Think Tank which could produce credible appraisal and analysis in respect of key issues affecting the Muslim Community. The think tank will be able to respond to and influence government legislation and to highlight the domestic and international implications of foreign policy decisions; human rights law breaches etc. The think tank will be able to track and provide informed comment on various government initiatives which may have an influence on the lives of the Muslim Community and play a key role in countering Islamophobic propaganda. It is worth considering the fact that such an organisation may better serve the interests of the Muslim community, if it is not entirely peopled by individuals from a Muslim faith. Indeed it was felt that perhaps some of the figureheads and senior executives should be drawn from outside the Muslim faith.

Importantly the Think Tank shall be able to deliver credible assessments based on the findings of the Muslim Polling agency, which can be distributed to all centres of influence and the media. IMMRA shall seek to recruit researchers; eminent academicians; scholars and political commentators who can collaborate on key issues & projects and who share a positive approach to Islamic values. Funding will need to cover the costs of study/report researchers and professional contributions from academics/scholars & political commentators on a project by project basis.

Dedicated Office Space – IMMRA Centre

It is proposed that IMMRA is resourced with a dedicated and resourced office which can provide a base for all of the four units. This will mean that in addition to providing accommodation to three dedicated media monitoring staff; there will need to be sufficient space; telephone; computer monitors and data analysis software to house 20 pollsters. It is also advised that consideration be given to the appointment of a Centre Director whose function will be to provide oversight and coordination to all four units – space will also be needed to house the Centre Director.

It is estimated that the Centre will need office space of approximately 3,000 sq ft.

It is our belief that IMMRA through the establishment of the above units, shall be best placed to combat the rise in Islamophobia – by exposing and subsequently challenging Islamophobic material in the media; by providing a steady, credible stream of accurate data regarding Islamic values and the Muslim community and by engaging with the key centres of influence, both in government and outside it. It is our purpose to ensure that when a point of view is required on a key issue affecting the Muslim community – IMMRA is the first point of call.

Costs

Capital Costs/Setting Up

Office Equipment – Telephones; Computers and associated office equipment

Calling Centre Costs	Number	Cost £	Total Cost £	Grand Total £
Computers & Monitors	20	500	10,000	
Server	1	2,000	2,000	
Telephones and Headsets	20	150	3,000	
Data Analysis software	1	5,000	5,000	
				20,000

General Office Equipment	Number	Cost £	Total Cost £	
Full Time Staff Computers	4	500	2,000	
Server	1	1,000	1,000	
Telephone Handsets	4	75	300	
Photocopier/Printer	1	1,000	1,000	
Fax Machine	2	500	500	
Database Acquisition/Copyright	1	10,000	10,000	
				14,800
Grand Total				34,800

Annual Costs – Administration

Media Monitoring & Basic Office Running Costs

Media Monitoring/Office Costs	Number	Cost £	Total Cost £	Grand Total £
Office Rent per sq ft	3,000	12	36,000	
Rates/Service Charge	-	-	12,000	
Stationery/Postage	-	-	12,000	
Telephone Costs Office	-	-	4,000	
Full Time – 4 x Staff Costs			72,000	
				136,000

Polling Unit

Polling Unit Costs	Number	Cost £	Total Cost £	
Call Centre Telephone Costs	-	-	50,000	
Pollsters x 20 @ 10 Polls pa	-	-	6,000	
Statistician/Analyst/Coordinator	-	-	30,000	
				86,000

Think Tank

Think Tank Costs	Number	Cost £	Total Cost £	
Professional Fees - Researchers Academics- Report writers	6 Major Research Projects Annually	5,000	30,000	
Professional Fees – Journalists	-	-	12,000	
Print/Publications Costs	-	-	24,000	
				66,000

Grand Total Annual Costs

				288,000
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