
Combating anti-Muslim racism

Congress notes the alarming rise in instances of anti-Muslim racism especially in the wake of the attacks in Paris and Brussels. Crime figures in London alone show a 60% rise in 'Islamophobic' attacks over the past two years. Figures from January 2014 to January 2015 saw 667 reported crimes compared to 1,068 reported in the next twelve month period.

More recently, in March of this year a Muslim student had her face veil ripped off in a racist attack on the Strand outside King's College whilst attending an Islamic Society stall.

Congress believes that educational institutions should ensure that their facilities are spaces which are free from all forms of racism with particular attention paid in the current context to anti-Muslim racism.

Congress resolves to produce guidance for branches on combating anti-Muslim racism and seek to develop joint initiatives with sister unions and the NUS.

UCU Congress 2016

1 Introduction

- i. The frequency and number of anti-Muslim hate crimes have undertaken a steady rise in recent years.
- ii. The monitoring charity Tell MAMA reported a 326 per cent increase in incidents in 2015, nearly two thirds of which were directed at Muslim women. The majority of these took place on public transport or in educational institutions. In particular Tell MAMA highlighted the ways in which Muslim women had their freedom to travel in public curtailed by fears of abuse and violence.¹

¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2016/jun/29/incidents-of-anti-muslim-abuse-up-by-326-in-2015-says-tell-mama>

- iii. Alongside the notable spike in street-based incidents, it reported many victims saying that bystanders had not intervened or challenged abusive behaviour.
- iv. The report also noted that the proportion of incidents – 11% – taking place in schools and colleges was “troubling”.
- v. It is also to be noted that there has been a sharp increase of racist hate crimes since the EU referendum of June 2016. The National Police Chiefs’ Council reported a 57 per cent increase in hate crime in the days following the referendum. There were 85 reported incidents of hate crime between Thursday 23 June and Sunday 26 June compared to 54 during the same period four weeks previously.
- vi. Surges in anti-Muslim hate crimes have been reported in Manchester and London in the wake of the Manchester Arena and London Bridge attacks. The trend of anti-Muslim incidents has been on an upward trend for the last four years. The Metropolitan Police recorded 343 incidents in the 12 months to March 2013, 1,109 in the 12 months to March 2016 and 1,260 in the 12 months to this March (2017).
- vii. More recently, attacks near mosques and Islamic centres has seen sharp rise with a 15 year old boy and an orthopaedic surgeon being stabbed within a week of each other in incidents in Birmingham and Altrincham respectively.
- viii. The Prevent agenda potentially heightens the risks to Muslims in further and higher education by setting forth a narrative which places those of a particular religious persuasion as risks to security and therefore a challenge to dominant cultural values. In this way Prevent institutionalises prejudice against Muslims. UCU has developed guidance for challenging Prevent.²

2 What to look out for

2.1 Anti-Muslim racism may include a range of behaviours and practices such as:

- direct verbal or physical attacks against individuals and groups;
- discrimination in relation to access to jobs, goods and services and other civic rights and entitlements; and
- cultural or religious insensitivity, which may create barriers to Muslim people becoming involved and result in them feeling marginalised or excluded from society.

2.2 Such discrimination against staff and students may take the form of:

- name-calling

² https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/7370/The-prevent-duty-guidance-for-branches-Dec-15/pdf/ucu_preventdutyguidance_dec15.pdf

- offensive 'jokes'
- verbal assault
- graffiti
- intimidation
- exclusion from friendship groups
- physical assault

3 Challenging anti-Muslim racism

- a. **The Equality Act 2010** makes it unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of religion or belief in employment and the provision of services, including education. The Act prohibits direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, victimisation and harassment on the grounds of religion or belief. It also requires universities and colleges to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
- b. **Public Sector Equality Duty.** The Equality Act 2010 also places a public sector equality duty (PSED) on schools and colleges in England, Wales and Scotland. The duty requires universities and colleges to have due regard to the need to:
 - eliminate unlawful discrimination
 - advance equality of opportunity; and
 - foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not.

4 Challenging anti-Muslim racism: Institutional accountability

4.1 Branches are advised to ensure that college and university leaders are aware that they have a critical role to play in ensuring that issues related to anti-Muslim racism are identified and addressed appropriately and effectively. Institutions need to ensure that:

- equality matters are identified and addressed through strategic planning and decision making
- all staff and students know about equality policy and procedures, and the policy and procedures are being implemented consistently and coherently across the establishment;
- responsibility for tackling anti-Muslim racism and promoting good practice is

a collective one

- all staff are appropriately trained and supported so that they can fulfil their roles and responsibilities.

5 What branches can do

5.1 Branches are asked to do three things:

- Raise awareness and establish branch policy on challenging anti-Muslim racism.
- Ensure your institution has set equality objectives and that these equality objectives cover anti-Muslim racism and the related issues of religious and racial discrimination as appropriate
- Ensure that UCU is central to and fully consulted on the design, development and implementation of policy related to pro-actively challenging anti-Muslim racism