

JOINT STATEMENT

THE TUC AND THE MUSLIM COUNCIL OF BRITAIN TO WORK TOGETHER IN SUPPORT OF WORKPLACE JUSTICE AND AGAINST ISLAMOPHOBIA

The TUC and the Muslim Council of Britain make this joint commitment to work together on issues of common concern in the belief that by combining together we will be able to achieve more towards those objectives we share in common than we can do by acting alone.

Our two organisations may have different origins but we share many important common goals and beliefs.

The Muslim Council of Britain is an umbrella organisation which brings together hundreds of faith organisations across Britain, all representing members of one of the world's great religions. The Council's aims are to benefit members of the Muslim community and promote a greater understanding of that community within society as a whole whilst working towards the common good of all. It seeks the eradication of disadvantage and discrimination and the betterment of community relations.

The TUC is a non-religious organisation, bringing together unions whose members include people of different religions and none. It speaks on behalf of people at work and campaigns for workplace justice. It is committed to the promotion of equality for all and the elimination of all forms of harassment, prejudice and unfair discrimination.

Our two organisations respect our differences and recognise everyone's right to hold their own beliefs but we share the view that they must do so in a way that respects others' rights and does not impose their beliefs or lifestyle on others.

The shared belief of the MCB and TUC in justice, equality and opposition to prejudice is matched by our belief that these objectives can be better achieved in the workplace by a framework of legislation that provides for workplace justice and by workers joining together in independent trade unions. We believe it is in the interests of workers to join the appropriate trade union at their workplace and that employers should recognise such unions.

We do not underestimate the scale of the challenge facing us today.

The TUC report *Poverty, exclusion and British people of Pakistani and Bangladeshi Origin* published in 2005 demonstrated that many people from substantial parts of the Muslim community suffer massive disadvantage and discrimination: 69 per cent classified as poor compared with 22 per cent of the country as a whole. Overall British Muslims are three times more likely to be unemployed than the population as a whole.

Islamophobia is a real and present threat, fuelled by misunderstandings, prejudice and the characterisation of whole communities because of a small number of dangerous extremists and a loud but tiny fringe made larger than life by some

sensation mongering and self-fulfilling reporting in some parts of the media. Such groups threaten their own communities just as they threaten society at large.

Whilst much reporting, especially in the immediate aftermath of the 7 July 2005 bomb attacks, has been sensitive and emphasised the strength of society achieved through diversity, there have been too many examples of stereotyping, prejudice and even incitement in the media's handling of community relations.

The rise of the far right and electoral successes of the BNP, sometimes through the exploitation of heightened feelings of deprivation and discontent amongst certain white groups, are alarming features of recent years and we commit ourselves to work together to address both the problems faced by these groups as well as counter the political exploitation of this constituency.

In order to develop our joint working we will continue with a regular dialogue between our two organisations and look to go beyond this framework through more detailed contacts and jointly organised events for members of our two organisations.

The TUC will use its networks to counter widespread misunderstanding of Islam and the way the religion relates to modern society, whilst the MCB will use its networks to raise awareness within the Muslim community of the values of union membership and the important role which unions have in seeking justice and fair treatment in the workplace and in wider society.