

THE MUSLIM COUNCIL OF BRITAIN



Rt Hon. Brandon Lewis MP
Chairman, Conservative Party
House of Commons,
London, SW1A 0AA

30 May 2018

Dear Rt Hon Mr Lewis,

We are writing to you to formally request that you begin an independent inquiry into Islamophobia within the Conservative Party, including a full audit to ensure racists and bigots have no place in the party.

Upon becoming Chair of the Conservative Party, you admirably launched the Code of Conduct for Members of Parliament and local election candidates, which includes the requirement to “encourage and foster respect and tolerance”, and you have since called on people to email you if they hear of bigotry within the party.

Yet no action has been taken against Bob Blackman MP who has now shown a consistent record of endorsing Islamophobia. Mr Blackman re-tweeted an anti-Muslim post by the far-right extremist Tommy Robinson, hosted the anti-Muslim extremist Tapan Ghosh in Parliament, shared an anti-Muslim post on Facebook and this week was found to have been a member of a number of Islamophobic Facebook groups.

Mr Blackman is not the only one who has fostered Islamophobia in your party. Just last month, there were more than weekly occurrences of Islamophobia from candidates and representatives of the Conservative Party including the following public examples:

- **5 April:** Mike Payne, who shared an article which called Muslims ‘parasites’ who ‘live off the state and breed like rabbits’.
- **17 April:** Alexander van Terheyden, who called Islam a ‘violent political ideology’ comparable to fascism and communism.
- **20 April:** Darren Harrison, who was alleged to have links to Generation Identity, an anti-Islam organisation with strong links to far-right groups across Europe.
- **24 April:** Phillipa Auton, who retweeted a tweet from Tommy Robinson and tweeted ‘Revoke Muslim immigration, repatriate and secure European borders..’ as a means of keeping Europe safe.
- **25 April:** Peter Lucey who liked a page by right-wing extremist Tommy Robinson and Geert Wilders, the anti-Muslim Dutch politician, and made a number of posts about Islam and the English Defence League.
- **27 April:** Nick Sundin, who tweeted the ‘Prophet Mohammed was a ‘f***** paedophile’
- **1 May:** Karen Sunderland, who called Islam ‘the new Nazism’.
- **1 May:** David Boston posted a picture of bacon hanging on a door handle as a way to ‘protect your house from terrorism’.
- **23 May:** Stephen Goldsack had formerly been the “Scottish security adviser” for the BNP in 2001, which led to the Muslim Council of Scotland accusing the Conservative Party of a “deep problem” of racism and Islamophobia.

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These cases are just the tip of the iceberg and what is in the public domain. Whilst they were thankfully dealt with once they were brought to public light, these cases suggest a wider problem.

Baroness Sayeeda Warsi who was previously the most senior Muslim parliamentarian in the Conservative party, said there was a 'simmering underbelly of Islamophobia' within the party. Furthermore, the inaction taken in high-profile cases, sends a signal that Islamophobia is to be tolerated in the Conservative party.

For example, the shocking Islamophobia that left Muslim communities reeling after the 2016 London Mayoral campaign is still a major point of contention. You will recall that Zac Goldsmith MP, the Conservative Mayoral candidate at the time, sought to smear his opponent Sadiq Khan, with accusations of proximity to extremism; suggesting that he would be a security risk. Such aspersions on Muslims are regularly cast by the extreme right and was widely condemned on this occasion as 'dog whistle' anti-Muslim racism, including by the leader of the Conservatives in the London assembly, Andrew Boff. There has been no censure of Mr Goldsmith's action and he has instead been invited to represent your party again. The Conservative Party prides itself in being against any form of bigotry and racism yet there are serious concerns that Islamophobia has poisoned elements of the party.

We want all political parties to ensure that they are firm in their commitment against all forms of bigotry and discrimination. Our democracy should not be overshadowed by a divisive culture within political parties that scapegoats minorities and alienates some who share similar political positions. Instead, fellow Britons should feel enthused to vote for and indeed aspire for office in whichever party that they feel makes the best political argument.

We would therefore urge that you consider our request for the Conservative Party to take the following steps:

1. Launch a genuinely independent inquiry into Islamophobia within the members, structures, electoral campaigns and public representatives of the party.
2. Publish a list of incidents of Islamophobia within the party where action has already been taken.
3. Adopt a programme of education and training on Islamophobia.
4. Publicly reaffirm from the highest levels a commitment against bigotry wherever it is found.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours Sincerely,



Harun Khan

Secretary General
Muslim Council of Britain