

Cross-Party Group on Challenging Racial and Religious Prejudice

Tuesday 25th October 2022 at 6pm on zoom

Present

Anas Sarwar	MSP (Chair)
Kaukab Stewart	MSP

Non-MSP Group Members

Omar Afzal	Scottish Association of Mosques
Nadin Akta	The University of Edinburgh
Sabah Aslam	Interfaith Glasgow
Sukhi Bains	University of St Andrews
Mahrukh	Amina MWRC
Dr. Harriette Campbell	ACWA /ACES
Alessandra Cecolin	University of Aberdeen
Isobel Ingham-Barrow	Community Policy Forum
Jacqueline Merchant	Scottish Parliament
Mary Osei Oppong	Chair ACWA / ACES
Kirsty Robson	SCOJEC
Charandeep Singh	Chamber of Commerce
Dilraj Sokhi	Sikh Sanjog
Linsay Taylor	MEND
Kimberley Wong	CRER

Apologies

Pam Gosal	MSP
Fulton MacGregor	MSP

Ephraim Borowski	SCOJEC
Kash Taank	Glasgow Life

Welcome and election of office bearers

It was proposed and seconded that Anas Sarwar should remain as Convener of the Group with Pam Gosal, Alex Cole-Hamilton, Fulton MacGregor, and Kaukab Stewart serving as Depute Conveners. It was proposed and seconded that Peter Hopkins would continue to provide the Secretariat to the group.

Previous minutes

The previous minutes were approved

Racial and religious prejudice against Sikhs, Hindus, and other South Asian minority groups

The remainder of this meeting focused on the challenges of addressing racial and religious prejudiced against South Asian minority religious groups in Scotland.

Charandeep Singh shared his insights into racial and religious prejudice against Sikhs in Scotland from his work with the organisation Sikhs in Scotland, with a specific focus on anti-Sikh hate crime which is a relatively new topic for the Sikh community to be talking about. There is a strong sense amongst the Sikh community that they do not see this issue in isolation as they know that these challenges face many different communities and not only the Sikh community. This can present a challenge for policy makers.

It was noted that the challenge of this issue can focus on religion, on ethnicity, or on issues of mistaken identity and/or invisibility. There are concerns that the Sikh community may be going unnoticed on these matters given the high numbers of incidents in relation to mistaken/invisibility issue. Sikhism is classified as both a religious and an ethnic group.

Charandeep discussed the issue of places of worship being attacked and how this can be both Sikh hate crime and mistaken identity in relation to Islamophobia. It was noted that in 21-22, hate crime against Sikhs increased by 170%.

Under-reporting is an issue and there are many challenges associated with this. Third party reporting is helping but reporting is not as high as it should be

The issue of definitions was discussed focusing on the classification of attack as Islamophobic and the issue of whether this falls under race or religion. This presents challenges for policy makers in terms of how to categorise these issues.

Some points that were then discussed include:

- The limited platforms for the Sikh community to use.
- The recent initiative called the Sikh Guard which is a police-led initiative in England.
- That work needed around community building and confidence building.
- That community barriers can restrict action from taking place
- That there is a need for cross-community focus rather than leaving issues to specific ethnic or religious minority communities.

Dilraj Sokhi shared her experiences as a consultant working with Sikh Sanjog. She is a third sector practitioner with interest and expertise in multiple subject matters. Anecdotal evidence, gathered by Sikh Sanjog in its interaction with BME Sikh women that have experienced hate crime indicates a lack of confidence and a lack of awareness around reporting in Scotland. Some key points raised include:

- Data is a challenge as most of the evidence is anecdotal
- Concerns about young children being bullied in schools but this being under-reported.
- Important to recognise the intersectional/gendered impacts of discrimination against the Sikh community.
- Sikh women, generally also lack agency and civic knowledge to act on measures, which tackle hate crimes.

There is also the Sikh Women Speak [report](#).

Sikh Sanjog also launched a COVID [report](#) a few weeks ago that tracks the impact of COVID in the early days, and how it has affected the BME Sikh Community with a specific focus upon Sikh women.

Questions and discussion

Questions and discussion then focused on:

- Issues of productivity in terms of education and careers
- Interlink between Islamophobia and diverse forms of racism and religious discrimination
- Challenge of reporting in more rural or less diverse communities
- How it will manifest itself in different ways in different places
- Educational focus should be on all schools including those with few or little ethnic and religious minority groups
- Similarity in terms of the issues and challenges across different ethnic groups
- Challenges of reporting and making a stand against racial and religious prejudice across different groups
- Issues of class and how shapes the dynamics of gendered racism and religious discrimination.
- Possible avenue to access further lived experience accounts might be available to be access in relation to the Hate Crime Bill.

AOCB

No further competent business was raised.

The next meeting is scheduled for 13 December 2022.