

Cross-Party Group on Challenging Racial and Religious Prejudice

Wednesday 26th June 2024 at 1pm
(on Teams)

Minutes

Attendees: Foyso Choudhury MBE MSP, Alessandra Cecolin, Chris Ringland, Dr Muhammad Adrees, Ephraim Borowski, Faten Hameed, Dr Asifa Hussain, Johnathan Murnane, Nahid Aslam, Nina Munday, Rajnish Singh, Rev. Yosuf Gooljary, Sameer,

Apologies: None

Previous minutes

Seconded

Update from CPG Convenor

Discussion

Invited speakers were asked to provide updates on the key issues affecting their communities:

Yusuf Gooljary - Challenge Racism Scotland

<https://www.challengeracismscotland.co.uk/>

Rev. Yusuf Gooljary, founder of Challenge Racism Scotland, introduced the CPG to his ongoing project which aims to uncover and analyse the connection between the Transatlantic slave trade and plantation ownership in the Caribbean.

During the presentation, Yusuf explained how several churches across Scotland benefited from earnings gained by business people and landowners who profited immensely from the slave trade. This included the construction and repair of church buildings as well as other properties owned by the church. One such example is St John's Scottish Episcopal Church Edinburgh Princes St, which was constructed with funds raised by individuals involved with the East India Company.

Rev Yusuf concluded his presentation with a call to action in the form of a commission being setup to investigate the ways in which communities in Scotland have benefitted from wealth earned from the enslavement and exploitation of others. It was also

mentioned that the aim of this commission should include acts of acknowledgement and commemoration of those who suffered as a result.

Ephraim Borowski - The Scottish Council of Jewish Communities

Ephraim Borowski delivered an update on the current situation of the Jewish community in Scotland, specifically focusing on the rise of anti-Jewish hate. While there may not have been any reports of serious violent attacks, it is believed that the number of incidents of antisemitic hate crime have doubled since 2023. Ephraim highlighted that while incidents of verbal abuse in the UK tend to target “visibly Jewish people”, an approach of tackling attitudes rather than simply reducing incidents of hate crimes is required. Particular concern has been raised in schools and universities, where students have experience harassment and discrimination.

Ephraim also included an observation on the recently published census data, highlighting a trend of the Jewish community in Scotland moving from urban to more rural areas. He also added that “Jewish” was made an option in the Ethnicity category of the census for the first time – this data is yet to be published.

Dr Muhammad Adrees – Muslim Council of Scotland

Dr Adrees, Convenor of the Muslim Council of Scotland, presented the group with details of Islamophobia in Scotland and the recent rise in hate crime targeting the Muslim community across the country – including serious acts of physical violence.

During the presentation, Dr Adrees highlighted the difficulties in obtaining accurate data on the numbers of Islamophobic hate crimes in Scotland due to issues with reporting and recording such information. He also emphasised the need to support young Muslims who experience harassment.

Quoting the CPG report on Islamophobia, Dr Adrees reminded the group of the statistics which indicate that the vast majority of Muslims in Scotland have experienced some level of Islamophobia. Mentioning the recent revised report, Dr Adrees stressed the need for the Scottish Government to implement the recommendations made in CPG report, asking why there has been such a delay in doing so in recent years.

Discussion

During the discussion, support was shared for the idea of a commission being setup to investigate how Scotland has benefitted from slavery and forced labour – especially in areas with connections to the British Empire.

Additionally, comments were made to highlight the significant rise in incidents of Islamophobia across the country in recent months.

Furthermore, concerns were raised about a number of Scottish citizens/residents participating in foreign conflicts on behalf of other nations. Specifically, a request has been made to seek clarification on the legal position of individuals who choose to

return to Scotland after participating in military action on behalf of foreign states/organisations.

Action Points

Foysol Choudhury MBE MSP

Invites everyone to report incidents, contact him and he can raise the issues in the Scottish Parliament.

A request for the Scottish Government to be asked what steps it is taking to implement the recommendations from the CPG Inquiry on Islamophobia in Scotland was made.

Another request was proposed by a speaker and attendee that the Scottish Government arrange a commission to examine how Scotland has benefitted from the slave trade and forced labour.

A further request was made for the Scottish Government to clarify if citizens who have engaged in military activities on behalf of foreign nations will face legal consequences upon returning to Scotland.

AOCB

None