

Cross-Party Group on Challenging Racial and Religious Prejudice

Tuesday 5th December at 6pm on teams

Present

Foyso Choudhury	MSP (Chair)
Pam Gosal	MSP

Non-MSP Group Members

Ifty Ali	Scottish Ahlulbayt Society
Nahid Aslam	NASUWT
Ephraim Borowski	Scottish council of Jewish communities
Alessandra Cecolin	University of Aberdeen
Farkhanda Chaudhry	
Daniel Gilius	MEND
Valerie Grey	Police Scotland
Lesley Hinds	
Peter Hopkins	Newcastle University (Secretary)
Sameer Hussain	Scottish Ahlulbayt Society
Parveen Ishaq	ELREC
Lindsay Taylor	MEND
Mateo Urquijo	The Pellere Group

Apologies

Kaukab Stewart	MSP
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Welcome

Foyso Choudhury opened the meeting and thanked everyone for attending. It was noted that people should feel free to suggest topics for discussion at future meetings and that sub-groups can be set up to focus on specific issues, where appropriate.

It was noted that the meeting on 23rd January will focus on racism against Hindus in Scotland.

Siobhan Brown is eager to join future meetings and is keen to have questions raised by membership of the CPG where relevant about the Hate Crime Strategy.

Previous minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

Review of Islamophobia Awareness Month (IAM)

Pam Gosal MSP provides a brief update on events in Parliament during IAM and noted that it was important that we are all doing what we can to support knowledge and understanding of different religions and beliefs. She was delighted to be the sponsor for the IAM event with MEND.

Foysoil Choudhury MSP noted that he had shared a press release yesterday about IAM and this received press coverage in Edinburgh.

Lindsay Taylor thanked everyone in the Scottish Parliament for making IAM the best that has been held to date. She made the point that it really mattered to the Muslim community that politicians were taking IAM so seriously. It was noted that tackling all forms of hate is important and supporting IAM is also part of challenging different forms of hate and discrimination; IAM is for everyone and not only for Muslims.

Daniel Gilius agreed and noted the increased discrimination against Muslims and Jews recently. He noted his thanks for the support shown during IAM. It was also noted that there are important issues around a lack of literacy about issues of faith. Peter Hopkins agreed to share a report about religious literacy produced by the APPG on Religion in the Media that was published in 2021.

Ephraim Borowski supported the previous remarks noting that the Jewish community has been suffering here and elsewhere, and it is important that we support each other.

Some other key issues noted include:

- Key moments and how we face into those and what are we seeking to achieve.
- Usefulness of talking about specific forms of religious discrimination individually (e.g., Islamophobia, antisemitism) but also useful to learn from each other and share experiences
- Need to consider the overlaps of racism and religion
- Need to consider the importance of definitions but that communities should own their own definitions
- Group meetings should have specific objectives for each meeting
- Questions about how to include those who are multiply excluded
- CPG meetings are open to organisations as well as individuals.
- Possible future joint meeting with Westminster APPG.

AOCB

There were a couple of updates about the Islamophobia inquiry recommendations. First, there is a possible meeting with Scottish Government staff to discuss the recommendations and second, funding is being sought to assess the extent of the usage of the media guidelines.

Foysoil Choudhury noted that he has submitted two written questions to Parliament about Islamophobia and would share the response to these when he receives them.