UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

"Maybe we are hated"

The experience and impact of anti-Muslim hate on British Muslim women

Dr Chris Allen, Dr Arshad Isakjee & Özlem Ögtem Young

Institute of Applied Social Studies, School of Social Policy

Introduction

For more than a decade, research has shown how Muslim women are repeated victims of anti-Muslim hate.

From data collected by Tell MAMA (Measuring Anti-Muslim Attacks), this would appear to be true in contemporary Britain. According to MAMA's verified data[1], attacks on Muslim women accounted for 58% of all incidents reported to it. Of those, 80% were visually identifiable (wearing hijab, niqab or other clothing associated with Islam).

Responding to this, a research team from the University of Birmingham has collaborated with Tell MAMA to identify and interview twenty British Muslim women who have been victims of anti-Muslim hate in the past year, to find out about and listen to their stories.

This resulted in us finding out that Muslim women's experiences were different; ranging from seemingly random instances of verbal abuse in the street and on public transport through intimidation and threat in public parks and in their own homes to violence against the individual, one of the most disturbing examples being a pregnant woman who was deliberately run over. Equally different were their ages and ethnicities: the youngest in her teens, the oldest aged over 50; their ethnicities reflecting the diversity that is Britain's Muslim communities. Most wore the hijab or niqab.

But it was the impact of their experience of anti-Muslim hate that was most significant. Victims were left feeling more scared or fearful than before. For some, it was immediate, for others, more long term. Most felt increasingly anxious and vulnerable in public spaces but for those who became victims in or around their own homes, that anxiety and vulnerability was also evident in the personal and private spaces. Whilst some felt anger and shock others experienced humiliation and embarrassment.

In terms of their Muslim identity, one of the victims spoke about how she felt "hated" for being Muslim. As another put it: "You start to question your identity: am I a British Muslim or a Bangladeshi Muslim?" Their experience undeniably led to feelings of exclusion and separation, of not belonging to Britain or of being a part of British society.

---

[1] Copsey, Nigel, Janet Dack, Mark Littler & Matthew Feldman, *Anti-Muslim hate crime and the far-right* (Middlesbrough: Centre for Fascist, Anti-Fascist and Post-Fascist Studies, 2013).

The purpose of this report is therefore twofold.

First, to speak to those in the public and media spaces about anti-Muslim hate and the ongoing victimisation of Muslim women: to give voice to those at times silent and overlooked individuals in order that their stories are heard.

Second, to speak to those in the political and policy spaces about the very real consequences of failing to tackle and take serious the threat posed by anti-Muslim hate: to recognise the potential detrimental impact such might have on policies aimed at ensuring cohesive, safe and prosperous communities amongst others.

For the research team behind the report, it is hoped that the evidence – the stories – presented here further reinforce the need to rightfully tackle anti-Muslim hate. For them, this need to tackle is a matter of social justice, equality and fairness, pertinent and relevant to all in society not just those who are the unfortunate victims of it.

Acknowledgements

Disclaimer

This report contains the views of individuals and agencies engaged by members of the research team. These views have been duly interpreted. Responsibility for any errors lies with the authors.
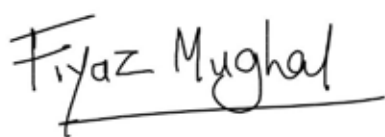
Contents

Foreword

This report by Dr Chris Allen and his team at Birmingham University is important for three fundamental reasons. (i) When talking about the 'numbers' of people who have suffered anti-Muslim prejudice and whether they are high or low, the impact on the victims, their families and communities are left out of the discussion. It should not be forgotten that there are real lives and real people behind this talk of 'numbers', especially in a highly politicized social environment where there are those who deny or limit the real impact of anti-Muslim prejudice. (ii) It confirms that Muslim women who are visible are, on many occasions, the group that is targeted the most. The gender differentiation of the incidents or crimes makes anti-Muslim prejudice at a street level even more worrying. (iii) It highlights the actual statements and experiences of Muslim women. This has been lacking in so many discussions and debates about whether anti-Muslim prejudice exists, whether there is such a thing as Islamophobia or whether, as some critics say, it is in the 'minds of Muslims.'

Today, there are few topics that are so frequently discussed as issues on Islam and Muslims; in the epoch of social media, everyone has a voice. In amongst the 'melee' of the discussions, opinions that have no factual basis (though driven by anti-Muslim prejudice), deny the experiences that some Muslim men and women have on the streets of our country today. This report by Dr Chris Allen gives life to those voices which are unheard. It also gives a voice to those minorities within a minority and to those who do not raise such incidents with police forces.

We warmly welcome this much-needed piece of work by an academic who is a leading light in this field. Whilst this report looks at the impact of street based incidents on the emotional, physical and mental well-being of victims, it builds on the work of Teesside University which looked at the on-line world of anti-Muslim prejudice. These foundational pieces of work will develop the cornerstones of work on anti-Muslim prejudice which will shape the future to come.

Yours sincerely,

Fiyaz Mughal

Fiyaz Mughal OBE FCMI
Founder & Director – TELL MAMA

Muslim Women as Victims of Anti-Muslim Hate

Over the past decade and a half, research has repeatedly shown the preponderance of Muslim women as both targets and subsequent victims of anti-Muslim hate. This was first acknowledged in the ground-breaking Runnymede Trust report, *Islamophobia: a challenge for us all*[2]. Published in 1997, the report noted how racially, culturally and religiously motivated hate was becoming a 'fact of life' for many women from within Britain's Muslim minority communities[3]. Taking a myriad of forms - from physical assault and injury through to insults, threats and abuse – the report went on to explain that whilst anti-Muslim hate was being largely perpetrated against the individual, its impact was being much more widely felt; detrimentally impacting the families, communities and wider social networks within which those women were active.

Setting out evidence of a number of anti-Muslim incidents involving Muslim women – a woman wearing a hijab being spat upon on a London tube train and a woman having eggs thrown in her face being two examples – the report set out what it described as the most serious consequences of anti-Muslim hate. First, because anti-Muslim hate was largely seen to be representative – Muslim women as representatives of all Muslims and the religion of Islam without differentiation – irrespective of whether you were a victim or not, being 'Muslim' was likely to mean that you would still feel threatened and insecure (p.39). Second, because anti-Muslim hate was seen to be against all Muslims and Islam, so anti-Muslim hate was seen to be an attack on the values, loyalties and commitments associated with, or integral to, Muslim identities and the religion of Islam. As the report adds, this has a detrimental impact on personal and community identities as well as feelings of individual and community worth. Finally, the report argued that anti-Muslim hate also had a symbolic value: a statement rejecting the view that Muslims or Islam can be a part of what it means to be British.

Similar findings were evident in the report published by the European Monitoring Centre for Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) in 2002[4]. Focusing on Islamophobia in the European Union (EU) following 9/11, the research highlighted how Muslim and other vulnerable communities had increasingly become targets of increased hostility. Greater levels of fear about 'Muslims' and 'Islam' undeniably

---

[2] Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia, *Islamophobia: a challenge for us all: report of the Runnymede Trust Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia* (London: Runnymede Trust, 1997).

[3] Ibid, p.38.

[4] Allen, Chris & Jorgen Nielsen, *Summary report on Islamophobia in the EU after 11 September 2001* (Vienna: European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, 2002).

exacerbated various pre-existing prejudices that in turn, fuelled acts of anti-Muslim hate. As with the incidents reported in the Runnymede Trust report, the specific ramifications of this varied. Primarily, the hostility manifested itself in terms of low levels of physical violence with verbal abuse, harassment and aggression being most widespread. But more interesting was the recognition that irrespective of location, it was Muslim women – especially those who could be visually identified as being a Muslim woman through their outward characteristics and attire – who were most likely to be the victims of anti-Muslim hate.[5]

In Britain, the EUMC report drew upon the findings of the work being undertaken by the Commission for Racial Equality at the time of 9/11. In doing so it set out a range of anti-Muslim incidents that had taken place across Britain, from those relating to violent assault and verbal abuse against individuals to attacks on property, including mosques and Islamic schools. As indicated elsewhere, anti-Muslim incidents against the individual were disproportionately targeted at Muslim women, especially those wearing the hijab or other forms of clothes associated with Muslims and Islam. As the report put it, identifiable Muslim women were the most likely targets for such things as "verbal abuse, being spat upon, having their hijab torn from them and being physically assaulted".[6] Drawing upon the notion of 'visual identifiers', the report concluded that across the EU those identifiers "provided a stimulant that offered an outlet for the venting of anger or some other denigratory sentiment", (p.34) not least because "the hijab became a visual identifier that not only represented the perpetrators of the attacks on the US but also an embodiment of what is in itself stereotypically Islamophobic, namely the headscarf as a statement that is both anti-feminist and anti-Western".[7]

Similar patterns relating to anti-Muslim hate were further acknowledged a few years later in the 2004 report from the Commission on British Muslims & Islamophobia. Titled, *Islamophobia: issues, challenges and action*[8] the report sought to recognise the "progress, unfinished business and new challenges" that had been emergent in relation to Islamophobia in recent years. In doing so, the Commission noted how incidents of abuse, discrimination, harassment and violence against Muslims continued to be relatively widespread. As with earlier investigations, the report noted how Muslim women were continuing to be identified as targets for, and subsequently victims of, anti-Muslim hate. Setting out a number of indicative examples, the report noted how amongst others, Muslim women had had their hijabs forcibly pulled from their heads, whilst others had had alcohol thrown

---

[5] Ibid, pp.6-7.
[6] Ibid, p.29.
[7] Ibid, p.35.
[8] Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia, *Islamophobia: issues, challenges and action* (Stoke on Trent: Trentham Books, 2004).

at them. The report also highlighted a number of far more serious and worrying anti-Muslim incidents. These included Muslim women who had been indiscriminately targeted and hit with baseball bats and attacked with pepper spray. Most serious was the example of the Muslim woman who was deliberately run over by a car.[9] Another particularly distressing anti-Muslim incident involved a Muslim schoolgirl who had her hijab forcibly pulled from her head by the parents of another child at the same school while a crowd of onlookers were looking on and laughing.[10]

Further evidence of the prominence of Muslim women as targets, and subsequent victims, of anti-Muslim hate was published a year later in a report by the Open Society Institute (OSI). In *Muslims in the UK: policies for engaged citizens,*[11] the OSI stated that Muslim women had suffered the highest levels of discrimination in the aftermath of 9/11, noting the EUMC acknowledged the link between anti-Muslim hate and recognisable Muslim clothing.[12] Similarly, the report noted how 'practising' young Muslim women had begun to encounter greater hostility from students, lecturers and employers. As the report put it, young Muslim women were prone to facing "double discrimination based on the grounds of gender and religious adherence".[13] Unlike preceding reports, the OSI findings suggested that a significant influencing factor of anti-Muslim hate was the widespread stereotypes that existed about Muslim women. Arguing that these were based upon notions of gender, class and 'race', the OSI went on to suggest that such stereotypes reinforced many of the dominant representations of Muslim women: as both oppressed and powerless. It added that not only did these offer some sense of justification to those perpetuating anti-Muslim hate but so too did they have a direct impact on the lives of Muslim women, judged on the basis of being representative of a stereotype – as well as representatives of all Muslims and the religion of Islam – rather than being judged as an individual.

The OSI findings about the relationship between stereotypes and anti-Muslim discrimination and incidents found greater resonance in 2006, when the visual appearance of a minority of Muslim women in the UK came under intense public and political scrutiny. Following the widely reported incident involving the teaching assistant, Aishah Azmi, who refused to take off her niqab when working with male colleagues, discussions and debates about the wearing of the niqab – including sentiments about the women who choose to wear the niqab –– prompted heated and largely polarised responses. In many ways, the actual women who chose to wear the niqab were overlooked and excluded from those debates. The issue again became prominent a few months later

---

[9] Ibid, p.31.
[10] Ibid, p.31.
[11] Choudhury, Tufyal, *Muslims in the UK: policies for engaged citizens* (London: Open Society Institute, 2005).
[12] Ibid, p.18.
[13] Ibid, p.18.

when the then Home Secretary, Jack Straw, spoke about how he felt 'uneasy' when speaking to Muslim women wearing the niqab. Reigniting earlier debates, Straw went on to describe the niqab as "a visible statement of separation and of difference".[14] If the OSI was correct in its findings, then it is likely that the scrutiny and focus on the niqab – quite separately from the widespread negative attitudes that ensued – not only established the niqab as a distinct and problematic 'visual identifier' which reinforced negative representations and stereotypes about Muslims, especially Muslim women.

Little empirical evidence from the policy spaces is available to support such a suggestion. However, academic research by those such as Chakraborti and Zempi [15] would appear to offer some critical insight. Noting the lack of differentiation made between the hijab and niqab in the public and political spaces, Chakraborti & Zempi go on to note how this same differentiation is rarely ever made in the media. For them therefore, it is likely that there will be similarities between the role of the hijab and niqab in relation to the targeting and victimisation of anti-Muslim hate. For Chakraborti & Zempi, this is without doubt: Islamophobic victimisation is not only gendered in terms of its conception but so too is it gendered in terms of its manifestation in the public domain of the street. As they go on, this process of gendering implies a process of 'othering', thereby making Muslim women – particularly those who are recognisable through the wearing of visual identifiers - particularly vulnerable to anti-Muslim hate in public places.[16]

This gendered manifestation of anti-Muslim hate-crime appeared to be further borne out by research commissioned by the EU funded European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA). Published in 2009, its report *Data in focus: Muslims*[17] noted how approximately 26% of Muslim women polled – from across a number of different European settings - had experienced anti-Muslim discrimination in the preceding year. Of those that had experienced such discrimination, the report noted how they were likely to have done so, on average, eight times over that same twelve months.[18] In terms of what the report described as 'in-person' crime - assault, threat or serious harassment – approximately one in ten of all Muslims surveyed (11%) had been a victim of anti-Muslim hate at least once in the previous 12 months. Whilst the report failed to disaggregate those experiences of in-person crime on the basis of gender, it went on to state that those Muslims who were victims of assault, threat or serious harassment were likely to have been a victim an average of

---

[14] http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2006/oct/08/leaders.labour.
[15] Chakraborti, Neil, and Irene Zempi. "The veil under attack Gendered dimensions of Islamophobic victimization." *International Review of Victimology* 18.3 (2012): 269-284.
[16] Ibid, pp.271-2.
[17] European Union Agency for Fundamental Right, *Data in Focus Report: Muslims* (Vienna: FRA, 2009).
[18] Ibid, p.3.

three times over the preceding twelve month period. Despite the research failing to fully disaggregate the data in relation to gender, it is unquestionable that a significant and disproportionately larger number of victims would have indeed been women.

A further finding from the FRA research was that despite the high levels of discrimination and in-person crime being experienced by Muslims, many did not report their experience to either the police or statutory agency. In fact, the report noted how 59% of those experiencing discrimination stated that they did not report it, whilst between 53% and 98% of victims of in-person anti-Muslim crime - depending upon location – did not report it either. On both counts, victims spoke about how they did not bother reporting the incidents as they felt that little would have been done.[19] It is highly likely therefore that significant disparities will exist between any 'official' figures relating to anti-Muslim discrimination and in-person crime and the 'actual' levels experienced by Muslims in everyday life. Official data is therefore extremely likely to be highly conservative in comparison to what the real picture might look like. This is particularly true of Muslim women because as many of the preceding pieces of research have sought to highlight, the willingness and receptivity to report anti-Muslim hate by Muslim women is even lower.[20] For many Muslim women who become victims of anti-Muslim hate, there is a very real sense of fear and mistrust in dealing with the police and state agencies, and for some, cultural and religious factors combine with that mistrust to create additional obstacles.

One way of seeking to overcome this unwillingness to report is the provision of community-based third-party reporting mechanisms, as an alternative. The 'Tell MAMA' (Measuring Anti-Muslim Attacks)[21] project was set up in 2012 by the inter-faith organisation, Faith Matters, to provide such a service. Modelled along the lines of the Community Security Trust (CST),[22] which monitors anti-Semitic incidents on behalf of Britain's Jewish communities, Tell MAMA gives people the opportunity to record details of any anti-Muslim incident they have experienced, whether as a consequence of being 'Muslim' or being merely perceived as being so. It is the first national project of its kind to specifically record anti-Muslim hate crime whilst also offering support to victims of anti-Muslim prejudice, bigotry and hate. Victims can either use a free phone number to report incidents, or they can report electronically, via email, SMS text, Twitter, Facebook and the Tell MAMA website. Like the CST, Tell MAMA passes on information directly to police forces through the 'True Vision'

---

[19] Ibid, p.3.
[20] See Allen & Nielsen (2002) and Choudhary (2005) amongst others.
[21] http://tellmamauk.org.
[22] http://www.thecst.org.uk.

reporting system,[23] set up by the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) to combat and report hate crimes. 'True Vision' provides a single reporting facility to all police forces, through a dedicated server hosted by the Metropolitan Police.

From data published by the Centre for Fascist, Anti-Fascist and Post-Fascist Studies based at the University of Teeside,[24] Tell MAMA recorded 584 anti-Muslim incidents between 1 April 2012 and 30 April 2013. In that report it was suggested that 74% of incidents took place online, meaning that just over a quarter (26%) of all incidents took place in the physical world. Of these, the report claims that not only were women disproportionately targeted (58% of all incidents reported were against Muslim women) but four fifths (80%) of the Muslim women targeted were visually identifiable as being Muslim (wearing hijab, niqab or other clothing associated with Islam). As with the findings from the EUMC research in 2002,[25] Tell MAMA states that the majority of anti-Muslim incidents recorded were of a low level nature. As such, one in every two incidents involved abusive behaviour. 8% of anti-Muslim incidents recorded were deemed to have involved 'extreme violence'. In line with existing research, Tell MAMA's data suggests that 63% of victims continue to not report the incident to the police or other statutory agency. In many ways, such findings are far from surprising.

Whilst such data is important in trying to understand the true scale and prevalence of anti-Muslim hate, an undue focus on what might be best described as the lowest common denominator of 'number of incidents' alone can be problematic. First, focusing on 'numbers' alone detracts from the need to understand and communicate the very real and detrimental impact anti-Muslim hate and the incidents fuelled by it have on the lives and wellbeing of its victims. Not only is this impact felt by the individual but so too is that impact felt by that individual's family, friends, community and wider social networks also. Second, the problematic nature of focusing on 'numbers' can easily feed unhelpful discourses which seek to create unnecessary hierarchies of victimhood. Similarly, these discourses can also be used to construct something of a 'straw man' that detractors of anti-Muslim phenomena use to either repeatedly declare that such phenomena does not exist or that they are far from socially and politically relevant. In both cases, the impact on the individual and others becomes lost or at least marginalised, thereby negating the very real impact anti-Muslim hate can and indeed does have. There is no way of putting a value on the damage done by prejudice, discrimination, bigotry and hate. From research undertaken over the past decade and a half, it is clearly evident that ordinary people - in this case British Muslims, in particular British Muslim women

---

[23] http://www.report-it.org.uk/home.
[24] Copsey, Nigel, Janet Dack, Mark Littler & Matthew Feldman, *Anti-Muslim hate crime and the far-right* (Middlesbrough: Centre for Fascist, Anti-Fascist and Post-Fascist Studies, 2013).
[25] Allen & Nielsen (2002).

– have been, and indeed continue to be, victims of hate crimes. As a matter of social justice, it is this that should be the most concerning to as wide an audience as possible. In line with this, this report focuses on trying to understand the harm, pain and suffering that is caused as a result of anti-Muslim hate when manifested through abuse, harassment, aggression and violence.

In compiling this report, researchers from the University of Birmingham undertook in-depth interviews with 20 British Muslim women who had been victims of anti-Muslim hate. Having initially engaged with the female victims about the nature of the incident, the researchers sought to investigate how the incident made the victim feel, what impact it had on them, their family and others, before trying to find out more about its wider impact: how it impacted upon feelings of security, how it made them feel about their local areas and their place in wider British society. Having completed the interviews and had them transcribed, these were thematically analysed with the intention of trying to improve understanding about the harm, pain and suffering caused by anti-Muslim abuse, harassment, aggression and violence.

Of the 20 Muslim women interviewed, 19 described themselves as looking as though they were Muslim ('visually identifiable'). Of these, 15 said that they normally wore a hijab or another form of headscarf; 4 said that they wore a niqab or other full-face covering on a day to day basis. The remaining interviewee stated that she did not believe that she 'looked' Muslim by the clothes she wore. In terms of age, the youngest interviewed was 15 at the time of the incident (16 now), the eldest 52. The majority were between the ages of 20 and 40 (six interviewees over the age of 20 but under 30, a further six over the age of 30 but under the age of 40). In terms of ethnicity, the 20 women interviewed were representative of the range of different ethnic heritages that mark Muslim communities in contemporary Britain. The interviewees included those of Pakistani heritage (seven interviewees), Bangladeshi (three), Arab (three), Somali (three) and White British (three) ethnicities.

For each of the interviewees, the anti-Muslim incident that was experienced took place 'offline', in a real-life setting as opposed to being 'online'. For information about the reporting of online anti-Muslim incidents recorded by Tell MAMA, see the report from the Centre for Fascist, Anti-Fascist and Post-Fascist Studies.[26] Whilst taking place in real-life settings, the incidents occurred across a variety of different public spaces: from car parks and on public transport, gyms and universities, to the ordinary street (including locations in or around the homes of those interviewed). Because of this and to protect those involved, all the names of the interviewees have been changed as have any references made in relation to specific locations. As with existing research and in reflecting Tell MAMA's data, the majority of the anti-Muslim incidents experienced by those interviewed were low level, most involving verbal abuse focusing on, or relating to, their visible identification as being

---

[26] Copsey, Dack, Littler & Feldman (2013).

Muslim. Incidents solely involving such abuse accounted for thirteen of the interviews completed. Those incidents that were more high level, involving violence and aggression accounted for a quarter of the interviews undertaken (five interviews). The two remaining interviews focused on anti-Muslim incidents that highlight the difficulty in trying to accurately categorise such incidents, both incorporating elements of harassment, intimidation and threat.

It is worth stressing at this juncture that whilst the majority of the anti-Muslim incidents experienced by those interviewed were low-level, as Victim Support rightly note, the 'seriousness' of the crime is rarely a factor in how people respond to their experience.[27] Whilst some are able to cope extremely well with the most horrific crimes being committed, others can be very distressed by even those most minor of incidents. Consequently, it is wrong and wholly inappropriate to make value judgements about the 'level' of the incident especially those that seek to dismiss or negate low-level incidents. This is especially true of incidents that are motivated and perpetrated on the basis of hate. As Victim Support add, hate motivated incidents are particularly hard to cope with. Unlike an accident or illness where there is normally no harm intended, as a victim of a hate motivated incident the victim is likely to know that it was committed with the sole intention of causing them harm because of who or what they are.[28]

Abuse

In terms of abuse, for all of the anti-Muslim incidents, interviewees experienced a distinct recognition of them being Muslim. For some, this was extremely apparent For Maryam (Arab, aged 34), this happened while she was sitting in her car at traffic lights. She recounted how a man walked up to the car and started saying

> "if I was a fucking Muslim"

Terrified, she said he then tried to open the window of the car whilst further, "ranting and raving […] and swearing through the window".

A similar situation faced Naureen (Arab, 35) who was also abused in her car whilst trying to drop her children at school. For her though, the abuse was from other parents. Having identified her as being Muslim, the parents – one male, one female – stood outside the car aggressively shouting anti-

---

[27] For more information about Victim Support and its findings see, http://www.victimsupport.org.uk/help-for-victims/how-crime-can-affect-you
[28] Ibid.

Muslim insults at her. Shaken by the encounter, Naureen explained how she was extremely concerned about the safety of her children and feared leaving them at school.

For others, the abuse they received focused on the allegation of them being a "terrorist". This happened to Shagufta (Pakistani, 19) while travelling on a busy train to university. Sitting on her own, two men boarded the train and sat next to her. Soon after, Shagufta spoke about how they began to laugh at her before talking loudly about her, suggesting she was a terrorist. At one point, one of the men loudly informed others on the train that she had a bomb in her bag. Getting up to move elsewhere on the train, the man "tapped me on my head, making remarks about my hijab […] [before] talking about how immigrants and Muslims are taking benefits from them".

Alia's (Pakistani, 34) experience was similar. Having been called a "terrorist", the perpetrator then accused her of being intimidating merely for being Muslim. As she noted:

> "I found it hilarious and annoying […] I'm kind of small and he was a huge guy, I don't look terrorising or intimidating yet he does".

As with Shagufta and Alia, the experience of other interviewees was extremely similar; their hijab, niqab or other pieces of clothing associated with being Muslim was a recurrent focus for the perpetrator's ire. Fatima, a 27 year old teacher, was abused in the street during her lunch break. Randomly approached by a man, he gestured to her hijab and shouted, "take that fucking thing off".

A few weeks beforehand, Fatima had experienced something similar when in hospital she was confronted by a woman who pointed at her hijab and said "yuck" to her face. Whilst both of these incidents appeared random, some of the abuse experienced by the interviewees was not. Deborah (White British, 53) spoke about how she was abused by a group of women she saw twice a week at her local gym. While waiting for her yoga class to start, Deborah recalled how one of the women seemed to become increasingly agitated while looking in her direction. The woman eventually walked over to her and began angrily shouting abuse at her. In addition to calling her "Mrs Usama bin Laden" she also said to Deborah "we do not like your clothes […] go back to Afghanistan, go and eat some pork".

Other interviewees spoke about how the abuse they received was similar to racist abuse, albeit with the distinct recognition of them being Muslim being included. As Farhat (Bangladeshi, 27) explained, she was repeatedly abused for being a "black Muslim" after being followed by a group of young men while shopping in her town. As she went on,

they seemed to be taking issue around how I dress […] different people have different issues with different things but I am not black [starts laughing]. I laugh now but at the time it was shocking.

For Aisha (Somali, 33), her abuse began as a result of her ethnicity, a group of young people initially calling her "monkey". But as she explained, some of the young people recognised that she was a Muslim because of the hijab she was wearing, prompting the abuse to change to "Muslim monkey".

Violence & Aggression

As some of the interviewees explained, abuse was – at times - something of a precursor of worse to come. Yara (Somali, 40), spoke about how she had been abused on her way home from dropping her children at school. Yara remembers that despite the abuser pushing a pushchair with a child in it, she proceeded to repeatedly tell Yara to "fuck off". Rushing off, the abuser followed her to her family home where she spat in Yara's face and said, "why do you look so ugly […]why are you covering your face?"

Worried that the abuser knew where Yara lived, she reported the incident to the police who took DNA samples from the woman's saliva. Yara says that the police were able to identify the woman and whilst they proceeded to question her, they did not prosecute. However soon after, Yara's house was attacked at 3:00am by people throwing stones through the windows. As she explained,

> we were very frightened […] we had lots of pieces of glass on the bed [and] I had some bruises as a result.

It is Yara's opinion there is no doubt whatsoever that the attack on her house was related to the spitting and abuse incident.

For Halima (Somali, 17) and her family, she remembers how a group of people had begun to verbally abuse them for being Muslim as soon as they moved into their house. Without the chance to get to know her neighbours, Halima spoke about how:

> these people hate us for no apparent reason, they hate us because of our background and our religion.

Whilst she and her family resigned themselves to being the ongoing recipients of abuse, they were not prepared for the violent assault that soon followed and which involved two local men attacking

her and her brother with bicycle chains. Shortly after, the police arrested the perpetrators. However, as Halima explains, they were bailed soon after and despite not being allowed to go near her house as part of their bail conditions, she said that the perpetrators still do, as indeed do many of their friends who are as equally aggressive and abusive.

The family home was also the location of Rachel's (White British, 28) distressing experience. Pregnant at the time, Rachel recalled how on the day of the incident she had gone to the bank but felt dizzy and near to collapse. Her husband came to collect her in his car but when they returned to their house there was a man in a car parked across their drive. Getting out of the car, she says she went up to the driver and asked him to move so that they could get onto their drive. Refusing to move, the other driver became extremely aggressive and kept shoutin:

> "thing […]get this thing away from me"

The 'thing' was of course Rachel. Becoming increasingly agitated, the driver threatened her:

> "I'm gonna pop you Muslim".

Hearing this and seeing how aggressive the man was becoming, Rachel's husband got out of the car and ran over to her. At this point, the driver got out of his car and started to punch her husband. With him lying on the ground, the perpetrator got back in his car and drove at her, running her over. Rachel was unable to get out of the way due to being pregnant. Noting the way in which her being Muslim appeared to be the primary cause for the man's anger and aggression, Rachel noted how:

> it doesn't matter how white you are […] he gave me a really dirty look and said 'fucking Paki bastards'

For Samina (Bangladeshi, 42) and Kelly (29, White British), their experiences were far more random, albeit with distinct similarities. Samina spoke about how she was walking near to her local mosque when a bottle was thrown at her. Just missing her head, Samina remembers how the bottle hit the wall behind her before shattering and spraying glass everywhere. Looking around, Samina realised that she could not see the perpetrators which not only worried her but made her extremely anxious and fearful of something more. This was made even worse by the fact that the incident took place on a Sunday evening when it was very quiet and dark. Kelly's experience was similar. She was walking home from work in a reasonably busy town when a car slowed down alongside her. Choosing not to look at them, Kelly said that she heard two men's voices say something to her. Continuing to ignore them Kelly remembers how she was then pelted with eggs before the car sped

off. Both Samina and Kelly believe that it was the fact that they were wearing hijabs – and so easily identifiable as being Muslim - that made them easy targets for aggressive actions.

Intimidation & threat

The final two incidents are more difficult to categorise, best being described as involving intimidation and threat. The first was extremely low level and involved Rehana (Bangladeshi, 20) while she was sitting reading a book in her local park. While there, she said that she soon became aware of a group of men sitting nearby who were, in her opinion, talking about her and the fact that she was wearing a hijab. Feeling uncomfortable, she noticed they were gesturing towards her. When she looked over she realised that they were repeatedly gesturing towards their legs then pointing at her. Seeming to suggest that their legs were her face, the men proceeded to violently punch their legs as if punching her. Scared, Rehana walked away from them and left the park immediately.

The second incident involved Lubna (Pakistani, 34) and was rather more serious and threatening. On waking one morning, Lubna looked out of the window of her family home to see that four decomposing pig's heads had been positioned around the house. One had been left on the outside window ledge, another on the front door step; the two others in the bushes at the front of the house. Lubna explained how:

> […] they must have thought that this kind of thing will intimidate us because we are brown and do not eat pork […] it was done to intimidate us but these were just idiots trying to shock us. It is all ridiculous

Happening shortly after the murder of drummer Lee Rigby, Lubna stated that she felt that it had been some sort of retaliatory attack.

Whilst it is clear that the visual identifiers somehow appear to make Muslim women legitimate targets for anti-Muslim hate - as being representative of all Muslims and Islam without differentiation - so too would it also seem that as part of this, all Muslims – again without differentiation – are in some way responsible and to blame for the actions and atrocities committed by a handful of individuals who choose to identify themselves as being Muslim or acting in the name of Islam. By doing so, it is clear that the perpetrators of anti-Muslim hate seek further legitimation for their own beliefs and actions.

Research available from the British government suggests that hate crime has a greater detrimental impact than non-hate crime has on the wellbeing of its victims. According to British Crime Survey's data from 2009/10 and 2010/11, victims of hate crimes experience a range of different emotions. Of these, 67% experience anger; 50% annoyance; 40% shock; 39% fear; 35% loss of confidence/vulnerability; 23% anxiety; 20% depression; and 17% record difficulty sleeping.[29] As Victim Support add, whilst the short-term effects of hate crime can be severe most victims do not suffer any long-term harm.[30] However, some do, and those initial short-term impacts - feeling anxious or being unable to sleep for example - can quickly develop into longer term problems. Such longer term effects can include depression and anxiety-related illnesses amongst others. For this research, all of the Muslim women who experienced anti-Muslim hate were interviewed relatively soon after the incident and so the impacts considered would be rather more short than long-term. As such, it would be useful to follow up on this research to see whether any long-term impacts or effects were in evidence.

Somewhat unsurprisingly, all of the impacts highlighted in the British Crime Survey were mentioned by interviewees when asked how the experience of becoming a victim of anti-Muslim hate had made them feel. For some, there was a clear intention to move on or to try and shrug off the incident, to dismiss it as the actions of the ignorance or stupidity of a handful of individuals. One of the interviewees who tried to do this was Mahmooda (Pakistani, 27), who experienced verbal abuse while driving her car. For her, the incident annoyed her rather more than anything else. However, in discussing her experience, she said that she knew a number of other Muslim women who had had similar experiences which had left them "really shaken by it [...] scared and fearful and vulnerable". In fact, the expression of feeling 'shaken up' was one that was commonly referred to by a number of those that were interviewed.

From those interviewed, three quarters (15 interviewees) explicitly referred to feeling more scared or fearful than before they became a victim of anti-Muslim hate. As the most common feeling expressed by those interviewed, this was felt irrespective of whether the incident related to abuse, intimidation or violence. For Rehana, her feeling of fear was one that was felt immediately.

---

[29] Smith, Kevin), Deborah Lader, Jacqueline Hoare & Ivy Lau, *Home Office Statistical Bulletin, 'Hate Crime, cyber-security and the experience of crime among children'*, Supplementary volume 3 to Crime in England and Wales 2010/11, Home Office: March 2012, p.22.

[30] See Victim Support's findings about the impact of crime, including hate crime, at http://www.victimsupport.org.uk/help-for-victims/how-crime-can-affect-you.

Following the threatening behaviour of the group of men in the local park, she spoke about how she had:

> cried in the middle of the street [...] I did not feel safe [...] I felt fearful and worried about my life.

For others, their feelings of being more scared and fearful occurred sometime after the incident, a process that had the potential to impact and influence their thinking and behaviour. Halima spoke about feeling especially scared of reprisals, which in turn made her too scared to go shopping in her local area. Explaining how this influenced her behaviour, she spoke about how she and her family began to go out "in a secretive way" so as to avoid any potential confrontation with the perpetrators and their friendship group. Samina said that she felt increasingly scared after the event, explaining that it was made even worse by the fact that she worked in a hospital:

> I was really scared and frightened. The negative pictures and feelings kept coming into my head [...] it kept playing in my mind, thinking if [the bottle] had hit me on the head and what the consequences of that would have been. I work in a hospital and know exactly what that would be like.

For most of the interviewees, the incident seemed to bring about more than one feeling. After feeling scared and fearful, half of the interviewees (10) said that it made them feel anxious. Half (10) also spoke about feeling increasingly vulnerable after the incident. Iffat (Arab, 29) explained how shortly after being verbally abused, while walking through a London Underground station, she felt increasingly anxious:

> Afterwards it just makes you paranoid [...] you start to think that everybody has the potential to insult you.

Shagufta's experience on the crowded train on the way to university made her feel a similar way:

> it made me anxious of travelling on the train again [...] when I took the train next time, I felt really cautious of the other people around me. I was very anxious where I was sitting and who was around me. I became afraid.

At times, it was difficult to differentiate between feelings of generalised anxiety following an incident, and specifically feeling more vulnerable. Where it was possible to differentiate, the interviewees' feelings of increased vunurability took a number of different forms. Rachel explained how she felt increasingly vulnerable of retaliatory attacks against herself or her children, fearing one of them might be run over too. Others such as Rehana experienced similar feelings to Iffat and

Shagufta; feeling increasingly vulnerable as a Muslim woman when "walking on my own or in the evenings" even in public places. Although the impact was not just in relation to public spaces. For those who experienced anti-Muslim hate in or around where they lived, most spoke about also feeling increasingly vulnerable in their home. This was true of Shareefa (Pakistani, 33) who was repeatedly abused by a group of young people calling her names such as "ninja" before having fireworks posted through the letterbox of her home. Given that Shareefa had a seven month old baby, the incident prompted a range of feelings that encapsulated a greater sense of vulnerability:

> It made me feel very scared […] I was scared to go out on the street or into the area on my own. It made me think continuously that I need some sort of self-defence class so I know how to defend myself and protect my children […] you start to think that something is going to happen. It kind of makes you feel like somebody is ready to attack you in the street […] it kind of makes you think people hate you because of the way you dress. And then you start linking everything as being anti-Muslim and that may well not be the case. For example, some people give you a look which may be nothing but […]

While others explicitly referred to feeling a sense of shock (9 interviewees), anger (8) and of having trouble sleeping (3), it was the combination and complexity of feelings that Shareefa highlighted that became increasingly apparent from speaking to the victims of anti-Muslim hate. Alongside those categories identified in the British Crime Survey, interviewees also spoke about feeling humiliated, isolated, embarrassed, disgusted and sad - all feelings that have the potential to detrimentally impact the lives and wellbeing of those involved. Additionally, as many of those interviewed explained, the impact of these feelings was felt much more widely: amongst their family, friends and communities. So for Fatima, while she explained how she felt personally "hated" for being Muslim, Yara explained how similar feelings left her too scared to let her children go out alone or even play in the family garden. Whilst Kelly's experience resulted in her family pleading with her to remove her hijab so that she no longer looked visibly Muslim, thereby reducing the likelihood of her again becoming a victim of anti-Muslim hate. Somewhat reciprocally, Mahmooda spoke about how her experience made her feel more apprehensive for the safety of

> "my community […] my family and friends".

Similarly, Aisha explained how the impact of the incident meant that her friends began to see her as being increasingly vulnerable to anti-Muslim hate in other settings.

The impact of anti-Muslim hate was not always obvious. One feeling to emerge from the interviews that did not appear in the findings of the British Crime Survey was the feeling of a loss of belonging

amongst many of the victims. For them, the incident made them think about how they felt about being a Muslim woman in contemporary Britain. While feelings of anger, shock and fear were at times quite immediate, thoughts about their religion and what this meant in relation to their sense of belonging to their community, society and Britain was something that seemed to occur sometime later. As Alia put it, "it makes you think about integrating […] you just put your boundaries up".

For Naureen, the feelings were much stronger:

> [since the incident] my husband does not want to stay in this country. He does not feel we belong here […] we do not feel that we are welcomed […] they see us as strangers who do not belong.

Similar feelings were surprisingly common. As Halima put it:

> we now see a totally different aspect of British society […] I feel that I do not belong to England, I just want to move away and never look back.

Maryam (Pakistani, 34) did not speak about wanting to move away, despite sharing similar feelings. For her, the feelings prompted questions about the place of Muslims in Britain more generally:

> maybe we are hated […] I feel we're not going to be accepted as British, like we're always going to [be] seen as an outsider.

What is especially important is that for most of those interviewed, the experience of being a victim of anti-Muslim hate seemed to bring about a 'change' in the way they felt within their communities and society. Before their respective incidents, all of those interviewed had no reason to question their role or position in British society. But, as Maryam put it, that all changed after becoming a victim of anti-Muslim hate:

> I didn't feel that way before [the incident][…] before I used to think that everyone is OK with us. But now something like this happens and it challenges what you think.

A similar process of change was echoed by Samina:

> I know my background is Bangladeshi but I would not know how to live there. I do not feel that I belong to Bangladesh. But when things happen to you then the identity crisis comes in and you feel that you do not belong to anywhere. You start to question your identity: am I a British Muslim or a Bangladeshi Muslim?

Given the way in which anti-Muslim hate has the potential to effect real – and significant - change in its victims, making them question their role and place in Britain and British society, failing to tackle anti-Muslim hate could therefore be detrimental to wider social processes and policies aimed at ensuring cohesive, safe and prosperous communities. For instance, if the experience of anti-Muslim hate effects a change in terms of the victim feeling as though they are less part of British society or that they do not belong, then it is likely to detrimentally impact on attempts to improve community cohesion and integration. Furthermore, it may also impact policies on preventing violent extremism. Such concerns clearly warrant further investigation.

For one interviewee however, her experience had a somewhat different impact. For Lubna, while she condemned the placing of four decomposing pig's heads around her house as "disgusting", the way it made her feel was quite different to how the other interviewees had felt. As she explained:

> They were trying to make us feel horrified, shocked and angry but it was just disgusting […] yet I still feel safe, I walk on my own and go to work. As I said before, I did not feel intimidated or scared, just angry about the incident. It has not affected the way I am with other people, we still socialise and do things in the usual way […] we live in an area where there are not many Muslims living and we do not have a mosque nearby so we are socialising with other people, no problem.

In terms of the overall impact of anti-Muslim hate, it is Maryam's observation that was maybe most telling. As she put it when reflecting on the incident and the affect it had had on her:

> "I don't think [people] understand just how it all feels. They've got no idea. They don't understand the emotional impact"

As the previous section began to explore, the impact of the anti-Muslim hate on the feelings of its victims was enough to make them question where they felt they belonged, not least where and how they fit into contemporary British society. Whilst this was one of the effects of anti-Muslim hate, most interviewees were keen to balance this with an overriding sense of realism, stressing how they believed that the perpetrators behind such incidents were in a distinct minority in today's Britain. Despite feeling more fearful and anxious since becoming victims of anti-Muslim hate, those such as Shagufta spoke about how:

> there will always be some odd people who come up and treat you in this way […] but this is not everyone.

Similarly, Mahmooda was keen to stress that despite the detrimental impact of the incident, it had not changed how she viewed society as a whole, "I do not think that the whole society is against Islam and Muslims."

She added though how she had to keep reminding herself about the need to have a 'positive outlook' on life. Likewise, Tahmina (Bangladeshi, 32) who despite her experience of being angrily confronted by a customer in the bank she worked at and told by them, "[…] you are a Muslim, the devil works through you", she acknowledged that:

> there are a lot of different people who come to the bank and it is very diverse […] just because someone behaved in this way does not mean that everyone is going to be like that. It struck me just how ignorant and insensitive [the perpetrator] was.

For some of the interviewees, the incident made them look more within themselves; to reflect on what it meant to be a Muslim, more so to be a Muslim woman. As Kelly explained:

> it did make me consider not wearing the hijab […] I started to question it and think about it. I was thinking am I responsible for [the anti-Muslim hate].

Others had similar thoughts. Tahmina for example spoke about how:

> as a woman […] I became very cautious of how I looked. I did not want to change it but I did still question my look […] I really felt uncomfortable.

Rehana's questioning and self-reflection on what it meant to be a Muslim woman was prompted by the response of her family to the anti-Muslim incident. Following the incident, she spoke about how her family were so scared for her wellbeing and safety that they repeatedly asked her to stop wearing the hijab. But as she explained, "[people] don't know how much [the hijab] means to me and to my identity".

For Fatima, reflecting on the incident made her consider another aspect of what she felt it meant to be a Muslim woman. For her, Muslim women were easy targets for hate not just because they were easily recognisable:

> Muslim women don't usually speak out – we don't speak out. Just try and uphold our morals, we don't shout back so we tend to get it more.

In her opinion, Muslim women were typically quiet and would rarely engage in public arguments and confrontation. She felt that this when combined with the more visually recognisable aspects of being a Muslim woman meant that Muslim women became very easy targets for those seeking to vent their anger or rage:

> everyone should be allowed to dress how they want [...] so why does a Muslim woman have to face discrimination when they just wear a veil? It isn't fair.

Another aspect to emerge from the interviews in relation to the process of self-reflection was the issue of Islam and Muslims being widely misunderstood in contemporary society. Kelly highlighted this when she stated:

> I believe that nobody has the right to attack me because of the way I dress [...] but I think that [the] majority of people misunderstand this and my religion and that is where the real issue is within society.

Society's misunderstandings were touched upon by a number of those interviewed. For them, most of this was attributable to the media and the way in which Muslims and Islam are represented. Deborah spoke about how she felt that whenever a news story ran that involved a Muslim, the media represented the issue in such a way that "the whole Muslim community is held collectively responsible for what happens".

Whilst suggesting something similar, Mahmooda highlighted what she felt was another significant problem in promoting misunderstanding and inaccuracies about Muslims and Islam: the way in which the media disproportionately focuses on the views of a handful of individuals who are presented as 'representatives' of 'the Muslim community' but who have very little resonance with

wider, far more diverse communities. As she put it: "it's the same voices that keep shouting and are heard by the general public". She went on:

> it is so frustrating and disappointing that the media keep focusing on the negatives […] if people from the wider society were able to come across and interact with Muslims, then they would have a better understanding […] otherwise, the only way their views would be shaped is by the images and reporting from the media.

Reflections

As mentioned at the start of this report, over the past decade and a half Muslim women have been repeatedly shown to be disproportionately targeted in relation to anti-Muslim hate. Prompted by the 'visual identifiers' that readily and easily demarcate Muslim women as different and 'other', these identifiers have been shown to provide a stimulant for those seeking an outlet for the venting of anger or some other denigratory sentiment about Muslims, Islam or indeed a combination of the two. At times, those same angry and denigratory sentiments are likely to be prompted by issues and events that are widely seen to be 'Muslim issues,' such as British foreign policy, terrorism and immigration. Whilst largely manifested in terms of low-level incidents - verbal abuse, harassment, intimidation and aggression - anti-Muslim hate can also become manifested in more serious forms, where acts of violence and physical harm are committed against the individual. Irrespective of whether low-level or high-level, all forms of anti-Muslim hate have a detrimental and lasting impact on its victims. As research has shown, the impact of hate crime has a greater detrimental impact on the wellbeing of its victims than those who become victims of crimes that are not motivated by hate. Because of the very real impact of this, the typically low-level nature of anti-Muslim hate should not be allowed to be either underestimated or negated. The impact of anti-Muslim hate is not just felt by its victims - by individuals – but so too is it felt by and resonates with families, friends, communities and society more widely.

In line with existing research, all but one of those interviewed wore clothing – hijab or niqab - that 'visually identified' them as being Muslim. Cutting across the diversity of Britain's Muslim communities, those interviewed spoke about how their experience of anti-Muslim hate was manifested in a wide range of different settings. In addition, in line with the existing research once more, the majority of these incidents were low-level. Those who were abused were clearly identified as Muslim, with Muslim - or Islam-specific - insults being routinely used. In a handful of instances, it was clear that traditional racist terminologies and insults were being conveniently supplemented with references to Islam or Muslims, suggesting a clear lineage and overlap between different discriminatory and hate-fuelled phenomena. In most incidents however, whether targeting the visual identifiers or the 'race' of the individual victim, the abuse overlooked the individual, rendering them worthless and indiscriminate.

Where violence and aggression was seen, this too was seen to be manifested across a number of different settings. Whilst two incidents were seemingly random and took place at street-level, others took place at the home of the victim, something that made them feel more even more vulnerable

and fearful for the safety and wellbeing of themselves and their families. The most serious example of this type of home-focused aggression came in the form of one interviewee being run over whilst pregnant. The victim's home was also the setting for one of the incidents of intimidation and threat experienced by two of those interviewed. Described as 'disgusting', this involved the placing of four decomposing pig's heads around a family home overnight. Whilst clearly disgusting, such incidents go beyond simple hate crime by infringing upon the human rights of the victim and their family. This is in relation to freedom of thought, belief and religion; freedom from degrading treatment; the right to liberty and security; respect for your private and family life, home and correspondence; and finally, the right to peaceful enjoyment of one's property: all of which are enshrined in current British law.

The impact of these incidents was shown to prompt a range of different worrying and detrimental emotions in the women interviewed. Whilst broadly similar to the findings of existing governmental research, those interviewed routinely spoke about feeling scared and fearful, of being vulnerable and increasingly anxious as a consequence of their anti-Muslim hate experience. Less so, others spoke about feeling anger, shock and annoyance as well as humiliation, isolation, embarrassment and sadness. A handful also spoke about how the experience had detrimentally affected their sleep as a consequence of fear, anxiety or shock. Whether specific to the experience of being targeted solely on the basis of being a Muslim woman, the experience of anti-Muslim hate unprecedentedly prompted a number of those interviewed to question the extent to which they felt they 'belonged' to Britain and British society. Whilst in many ways that questioning and self-reflection would appear to be temporary, its impact should not be allowed to be underestimated, particularly when in recent years the British Government has introduced a range of different policies that seek to encourage better integration and cohesion as well as an improved sense of belonging. There is little doubt that many of these policies have been focused on Muslim communities. In this respect, politicians and policymakers should consider the issue of anti-Muslim hate and the very real detrimental impact it has on contemporary society within the contexts of these wider issues.

For some of the Muslim women interviewed, that process of questioning and self-reflection resulted in them beginning to question who they were in terms of being Muslim. More so, it prompted some to question and reflect upon what it means to be a Muslim woman in Britain today. Some questioned the wearing of the hijab or niqab, thinking about whether they, as individuals, should continue wearing it or not. Maybe unsurprisingly - and somewhat reassuringly - none of those interviewed stated that they had stopped wearing the hijab or niqab, or had ever truly intended to do so as a consequence of experiencing anti-Muslim hate. It is possible that this reasoning was

informed by the pragmatic response of many of those interviewed who spoke about the need to ensure that the motives and views of the perpetrators of anti-Muslim hate were not conflated with the rest of society. Whilst some of those interviewed did speak about wanting to move away – a small number of moving away from Britain - others were keen to stress how there will always be some in any society that seek to ferment and cultivate bigotry and hate. One response to this however was the recognition by some of the perceived role of the media and its negative representation of Muslims and Islam. For some, tackling this would ensure that a better understanding of Muslims and Islam would begin to emerge, which in turn would make more people see anti-Muslim hate for what it is, unfounded and unwanted in contemporary Britain.

Considering the data published by Tell MAMA – in this instance, its 'offline', real-world incidents only – then it would seem fair to suggest that Muslim women are continuing to be the disproportionately targeted victims of anti-Muslim hate in the contemporary British setting. In acknowledgement of this, twenty of those Muslim women who had reported their experience of anti-Muslim hate to Tell MAMA were interviewed for this report. Giving them a voice to speak about their experience, the aim of this research was to try to not only understand their experience but, more importantly, how that experience of anti-Muslim hate made them feel; how it impacted on their everyday lives and sense of wellbeing. In doing so, it was hoped that hearing the voices of victims of anti-Muslim hate would in some way act as a counter-balance to the at times unhelpful focus that has been placed on establishing the 'numbers' of incidents alone. Whilst important – and indeed necessary – this undue focus undoubtedly has the potential to diminish and distract: diminishing and distracting from the very real harm, pain and suffering that is caused by anti-Muslim hate in all its forms.

Maybe somewhat more aspirational was the hope that this report would support the argument for seeing anti-Muslim hate as a matter of social justice, equality and fairness; one that is pertinent and relevant to all in society, not just those who are unfortunate enough to become the victims of it. Anti-Muslim hate, as with all forms of hate, can never be seen or justified on the basis that it is the 'problem' of those the hate is being targeted at. As coined by the Runnymede Trust in 1997, it remains "a challenge for us all". This is because, quite irrespective of the 'numbers' of incidents, there is no way of putting a value on the damage done by prejudice, discrimination, bigotry and hate.

From research undertaken over the past decade and a half, it is clearly evident that ordinary people - in this case British Muslims (in particular British Muslim women) – have been, and indeed continue

to be, victims of anti-Muslim hate. From the point of view of social justice, equality and fairness, there is little question that this should indeed be of concern to us all.