WE FEAR
FOR OUR LIVES
Offline and Online Experiences of Anti-Muslim Hostility

By Imran Awan & Irene Zempi

BIRMINGHAM CITY University

NOTTINGHAM TRENT UNIVERSITY

TellMAMA
MEASURING ANTI-MUSLIM ATTACKS

We Fear for our Lives:
Offline and Online Experiences of Anti-Muslim Hostility

By Imran Awan and Irene Zempi

October 2015

BIRMINGHAM CITY University

NOTTINGHAM TRENT UNIVERSITY

TellMAMA
Measuring Anti-Muslim Attacks

Acknowledgements

All correspondence about this report should be directed to:

Imran Awan

Deputy Director of the Centre for Applied Criminology, Birmingham City University

Email: imran.awan@bcu.ac.uk | Tel: +44 (0) 121 331 5640

Irene Zempi

Lecturer in Criminology, School of Social Sciences, Nottingham Trent University.

Centre for Study and Reduction of Hate Crimes, Bias and Prejudice,

Nottingham Trent University

Email: irene.zempi@ntu.ac.uk | Tel: +44 (0) 115 848 5155

Table of Contents

Foreword by Director of TELL MAMA, Fiyaz Mughal

This report highlights the impact of offline and online anti-Muslim hate incidents and crimes. It indicates the impacts that such incidents have on the emotional and psychological health of members of Muslim communities and is also key to highlighting these impacts through the experiences and the trauma of victims. The recommendations are also extremely important since they highlight the fact that social media companies must and should do more. For example, when someone reports abuse through Twitter, there is no category for reporting racist or prejudiced language, and the way that the reporting in structure is set up, only deals with threats of violence and harassment. Yet, we all know that promoting hatred and bigotry does not always involve threats of violence and in these circumstances, social media companies like Twitter can rely on the fact that material that does not cross the criminal threshold or breach their terms of service, in order to suggest that it will not be taken down.

To some degree they are right, and social media companies are pushing the 'counter-speech' line partly because if they are seen to take stronger action, they fear a loss of customers on their platforms. In the end, they are profit-making companies and ensuring the highest numbers of users is the main target that they need to meet, which means that material that does not cross the criminal threshold or breach their terms of service, yet remains deeply offensive and specific to a community group, is not removed. This leads to an increasing build-up of bigoted and prejudiced material that sits in cyberspace and is increasingly accessible to members of the public. This is the problem that we are dealing with and to some degree, anti-Muslim hatred is a phenomenon that is relevant to our day and age, given the actions of the so-called Islamic State, terrorists purporting to act in the name of Islam and the refugee crisis engulfing countries today.

This report also makes the point that work needs to be done in schools and within TELL MAMA, we repeat our call that the Department for Education work with agencies to develop guidance packs for teachers on tackling anti-Muslim hatred within the context of tackling other forms of hate. This was particularly and acutely the case after the Charlie Hebdo murders where Muslim school children were affected. We will, in the meantime, continue to advocate for parents and children who are affected by these issues. Finally, victims have also voiced a desire that individuals in the criminal justice system and those supporting victims in courts, be reflective of wider communities. At the very least, this can give victims the confidence to speak out and provide testimony in a court of law. We welcome this.
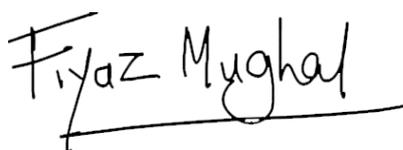
Fiyaz Mughal OBE, Director – Tell MAMA

Executive Summary

This report is a joint collaboration with the authors, Mr Imran Awan and Dr Irene Zempi, and Tell MAMA. The overall aim of this report is to examine the impacts of online and offline anti-Muslim hate crime. In doing so, the authors conducted 20 in-depth interviews with Muslim men and women who have been victims of both online and offline anti-Muslim hate. Since Tell MAMA's inception in 2012, it has found a high proportion of online and offline incidents of anti-Muslim hate reported to it. With this in mind, the authors of the report have produced the first ever report to examine the nature and impacts of both online and offline anti-Muslim hate crime. The report concludes with a list of key recommendations that participants suggested to us, which we describe as the 'victims charter'.

The reports principle findings are as follows:

- Both online and offline incidents are a continuity of anti-Muslim hate and thus should not be examined in isolation.

- Participants described living in fear because of the possibility of online threats materialising in the 'real world'.

- The prevalence and severity of online and offline anti-Muslim hate crimes are influenced by 'trigger' events of local, national and international significance.

- The visibility of people's Muslim identity is key to triggering both online and offline anti-Muslim hate crime.

- Muslim women are more likely to be attacked in comparison to Muslim men, both in the virtual world and in the physical world.

- Victims of both online and offline anti-Muslim crime suffer from depression, emotional stress, anxiety and fear.

- The victims of online anti-Muslim hate crime remain less 'visible' in the criminal justice system.

- Muslim men are unlikely to report an incident of anti-Muslim abuse for fear of being viewed as 'weak'.

Recommendations

1. ***Anti-Muslim hate must be challenged from within Muslim communities.***
   The report found that participants would like the community to speak out against the hate crimes that they suffer.

2. *Media training around reporting stories to do with Muslims.*
The media must portray a more balanced viewpoint when discussing Muslim stories as this could impact upon the way they are viewed by wider society.

3. *The police can improve the way in which they handle cases of anti-Muslim hate crime.*
Participants who reported incidents to the police felt that they were not taken seriously.

4. *The public should intervene and assist victims of anti-Muslim hate.*
Victims do not necessarily want physical action but just a phone call to assist the police.

5. *Anti-Muslim hate crime awareness and visibility.*
Better awareness of what a hate crime is and what people can do to help reassure them and build confidence.

6. *Social media companies should make their systems of reporting hate crime more user friendly.*
Social media companies can do much more to help tackle online prejudice and bigotry through specific systems that help victims report anti-Muslim hate crime.

7. *Diversity in the criminal justice system.*
A more diverse criminal justice system with people of all backgrounds could help break down the barriers that might exist for victims reporting anti-Muslim hate crime.

8. *Challenging the language and engaging schools in the debate.*
To tackle anti-Muslim prejudice seriously, we need to start with schools and begin challenging the language, and engaging schools in the debate.

Introduction

Following the terrorist attacks in Paris and Tunisia in 2015, and in Woolwich, south-east London where British Army soldier Drummer Lee Rigby was murdered in 2013, we have seen a sharp rise in anti-Muslim attacks (Littler and Feldman, 2015)[1]. These incidents have occurred offline where mosques have been targeted, Muslim women have had their hijab (headscarf) or niqab (face veil) pulled off, Muslim men have been attacked, and racist graffiti has been scrawled against Muslim graves and properties. Moreover, there has been a spike in online anti-Muslim attacks where Muslims have been targeted by campaigns of cyber bullying, cyber harassment, cyber incitement and threats of offline violence. A recent analysis of Tell MAMA's (Measuring Anti-Muslim Attacks) data found 548 verified incidents (of 729) reported to them concerning anti-Muslim abuse. The majority of incidents took place online (402 out of 548). Almost, a fifth of service users reported repeat offline incidents of anti-Muslim hate with Muslim women suffering more offline incidents than men. Typically, the victim was wearing traditional Islamic clothing at the time of the incident and the perpetrators were overwhelmingly white male (Littler and Feldman, 2015)[2].

Muslims, particularly those with a 'visible' Muslim identity, are more vulnerable to anti-Muslim hostility, intimidation, abuse and threats of violence, both online and offline. We argue that for repeat victims, it is difficult to isolate the online threats from the intimidation, violence and abuse that they suffer offline. Rather, there is a continuity of anti-Muslim hostility in both the virtual and the physical globalised world. From this perspective, in collaboration with Tell MAMA, we have produced the first ever report that has examined the impacts of online and offline anti-Muslim hate crime upon Muslim men and women, their families and wider communities, and identify ways to prevent and respond to anti-Muslim hostility in Britain. In other words, this is the first ever report to shed light on the anti-Muslim hate crime experiences of British Muslim men and women both in the virtual and physical world, rather than examining these experiences in isolation.

Specifically, we conducted 20 in-depth interviews with British Muslims who have been victims of online and offline anti-Muslim hate crimes and had reported their victimisation experiences to Tell MAMA. Participation to this study was voluntary. Also, participants' names have been changed in order to ensure their anonymity.

The aim of our report was:

---

[1] Littler, M. and Feldman, M. (2015) *Tell MAMA Reporting 2014/2015: Annual Monitoring, Cumulative Extremism, and Policy Implications*, Teesside: Teesside University Press.
[2] *ibid*

- To examine the nature and extent of online and offline anti-Muslim hate crime directed towards Muslims in the UK.
- To consider the impact of this hostility upon victims, their families and wider Muslim communities.
- To offer recommendations on preventing and responding to anti-Muslim hostility.

Our report found that participants had a range of anti-Muslim hate experiences from online abuse where they were threatened with violence to offline abuse where they suffered verbal and physical abuse. In the online world, their experiences were shaped by hostile comments, racist posts, fake ID profiles, messages and images used to harass and incite violence against them. For example, in one case, a female participant had an image of her redistributed on Twitter with the caption '*You Burqa wearing slut*'. In another case, the perpetrators found the address of the victim and threatened her with violence. In addition, some of the offline examples included incidents where a young girl was punched, kicked and had her headscarf pulled off. She was then threatened with someone wanting '*to blow her face off*'. Similarly, we found disturbing accounts of how Muslim men had also suffered anti-Muslim hostility in the workplace - although in most cases they were too scared to report it to the police in case people perceived them as being 'weak'. For example, one interviewee described how his work colleagues had locked the room where he was praying and on another occasion had his beard pulled. He told us that '*I actually went in the car and cried.*' The overall experience of anti-Muslim hostility had a significant impact on him and his family and in his words it had left his daughter 'suicidal.' Throughout the report it is clear that both offline and online anti-Muslim hate crimes and incidents have significant impacts for the victim whose level of self-esteem and confidence are impacted, as well as them living in a constant state of fear and anxiety. As one of the interviewees told *us 'I cried a lot. I'm not going to harm anyone but people hate me because I wear a headscarf! Why!'* Another participant added '*I don't feel confident.*' Unarguably, such feelings can lead to a sense of 'othering' and risk damaging community cohesion as victims feel alienated, isolated and that they 'don't belong'.

Out of the twenty participants, we interviewed eleven female and nine male participants. A common characteristic amongst all participants was that they were 'visibly identifiable' as Muslim. For example, some of the female participants wore the jilbab, hijab and/or niqab whilst the male participants had a beard and often wore the traditional Islamic clothing and a cap that identified them as being Muslim. In terms of age, the majority of interviewees were aged between 20 - 30 years (seven participants aged 20 and over and eight participants aged 30 and over) with four participants aged 40 and over and one participant aged 50.

The youngest participant we interviewed was aged 20 and the oldest was 50. In terms of ethnicity, we had a broad and diverse group, which was made up of

different backgrounds and ethnicity. The interviewees included those from Asian heritage (eleven) participants, White British convert (five), Somalian (three) and Libyan (one).

Ultimately, we hope that by sharing their stories we are able to get a clearer picture of the links between online and offline anti-Muslim abuse, and the impact manifestations of anti-Muslim hostility have on victims. As we report on these stories, we hope that this report can be used by policy makers, the police, third-party reporting organisations, victim support, internet companies and others interested in anti-Muslim hate crime to look at providing some tangible solutions to this increasing problem.

Determinants of anti-Muslim hate crime incidence

Hate crime is the umbrella concept used in its broadest sense to describe incidents motivated by hate, hostility or prejudice towards an individual's identity (Chakraborti and Garland, 2009).[3] Specifically, the College of Policing (2014) earmarks hate crime as offences that are motivated by hostility or prejudice on particular grounds – race, religion, sexual orientation, transgender status and disability.[4] From this perspective, anti-Muslim hate crime is defined as any criminal offence which is perceived, by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by a hostility or prejudice based upon a person's religion or perceived religion, that is, their Muslim religion, and can be manifested both online and offline.

The prevalence and severity of anti-Muslim hate crimes are influenced by 'trigger' events of local, national and international significance. As Williams and Burnap (2015) point out, hate crimes are communicative acts, which are often provoked by antecedent events that incite a desire for retribution in the targeted group, towards the group that share similar characteristics to the perpetrators.[5] From this perspective, hate crimes increase following 'trigger' events as they operate to galvanise tensions and sentiments against the suspected perpetrators and groups associated with them. Indeed, evidence shows that anti-Muslim hate crimes have increased significantly following 'trigger' attacks including terrorist attacks carried out by individuals who choose to identify themselves as being Muslim or acting in the name of Islam (Hanes and Machin, 2014).[6] Spikes in anti-Muslim hate crimes and incidents following 'trigger' events are not confided to offline settings; rather, the offline pattern is replicated online (Awan, 2014).[7]

The Woolwich attack[8] was cited by participants in this study as a terrorist antecedent 'trigger' event, which induced a significant increase in their online and offline anti-Muslim hate crime experiences. Sarah argued *'I know sisters who have been punched, being shouted at on the street, being pulled and pushed around by people,*

[3] Chakraborti, N. and Garland, J. (2009) *Hate Crime*, Sage: London.
[4] College of Policing (2014) *Hate Crime Strategy and Operational Guidance*, London: College of Policing.
[5] Williams, M. L. and Burnap, P. (2015) 'Cyberhate on social media in the aftermath of Woolwich: A case study in computational criminology and big data' *British Journal of Criminology*.
[6] Hanes, E. and Machin, S. (2014) 'Hate Crime in the Wake of Terror Attacks: Evidence from 7/7 and 9/11' *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice* 30: 247-267.
[7] Awan, I. (2014) 'Islamophobia on Twitter: A Typology of Online Hate Against Muslims on Social Media' *Policy & Internet* 6 (2): 133-150.
[8] The British-born Muslim converts Michael Adebolajo and Michael Adebowale murdered Fusilier Lee Rigby at the Royal Artillery Barracks in Woolwich, south-east London on 22 May 2013. This was the first al-Qaida-inspired attack to claim a life on British soil since the 7/7 bombings.

had their houses being burned down. These are the results of trigger events like when Lee Rigby was murdered'. Ahmed stated '*I have figured out over the years that this happens when there is a terrorist attack in the news committed by Muslims so Islamophobia happens even more. A clear example is the Lee Rigby murder'.* Indeed, there was a substantial spike in reports of anti-Muslim hate crime following the Woolwich attack, which ranged from general abuse towards 'visible' Muslims on the street, to graffiti at mosques, through to firebombs at mosques and online threats (Littler and Feldman, 2015).[9] Britain's biggest force, the Metropolitan police, recorded 500 anti-Muslim hate crimes following the Woolwich attack.[10]

Participants reported that the prevalence of both online and offline anti-Muslim hate crimes increased following high-profile terrorist attacks around the world such as Sydney[11], the Charlie Hebdo attack in Paris[12], and in Copenhagen[13] and Tunisia[14]. Reflecting a spike in both online and offline anti-Muslim hate crime, Hamza stated '*I have received Islamophobic abuse in social media and on the street on various occasions. After the Sydney incident, I received Islamophobic remarks on four separate occasions in the space of two weeks'.* Asma argued '*After the Paris attacks, I got a lot of nasty comments especially on social media'.* Aisha noted '*Anti-Muslim hate crime does rise as soon as an incident occurs like the attacks in Sydney, the Copenhagen shootings and the Tunisia attacks'.*

In a globally connected world, the actions by one terrorist group such as ISIS can lead to counter-reactions and impacts on Muslims in the UK. Participants pointed out that they were '*bombarded with online abuse and offline threats'* with the prominence of ISIS, especially following the release of videos showing beheadings carried out by ISIS or when there was a terror threat made against the UK from ISIS members. Sophie stated '*I keep my Facebook account private but I get a lot of abuse on twitter especially if something has happened like when ISIS killed Alan Henning'.* She

---

[9] Littler, M. and Feldman, M. (2015) *Tell MAMA Reporting 2014/2015: Annual Monitoring, Cumulative Extremism, and Policy Implications*, Teesside: Teesside University Press.

[10] The Guardian (2013) *UK anti-Muslim hate crime soars, police figures show*, http://www.theguardian.com/society/2013/dec/27/uk-anti-muslim-hate-crime-soars (accessed 10 July 2015).

[11] On 15-16 December 2014, Man Haron Monis, an Iranian-born Australian citizen, took hostages in a siege at the Lindt Chocolate Café at Martin Place, Sydney. The siege resulted in the death of Monis and two hostages.

[12] For three days (from 7 to 9 January 2015), a series of terrorist attacks occurred in Paris. On 7 January 2015, brothers Saïd and Chérif Kouachi forced their way into the offices of the French satirical weekly newspaper Charlie Hebdo in Paris and killed 11 people and injured 11 others in the building. After leaving, they killed a French National Police officer outside the building. On 9 January, police tracked the assailants to an industrial estate in Paris, where they took a hostage. Another gunman also shot a police officer on 8 January and took hostages the next day, at a kosher supermarket in Paris. The gunman was killed and four hostages were found dead.

[13] On 15 February 2015, a gunman opened fire on a synagogue, hours after one man was killed and three police officers wounded during an attack on free speech event in city.

[14] On 26 June 2015, a gunman attacked the beach resort of Sousse in Tunisia. ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack in which 38 people - plus the gunman - were killed. At least 15 of the victims were British.

added *'I recently posted a comment on Channel 4 News webpage saying that the ISIS actions are bad and then I got loads and loads of abusive comments like 'you are part of a terrorist religion'.* Sarah told us '*I was on my way to the shops and people shouted at me 'why don't we chop your head off?'* In another case, people on the street shouted *'Your head will be much better on the floor'.* Along similar lines, Aisha stated '*The cancer of ISIS and the atrocities that Boko Haram commit in Nigeria, when these incidents happen anti-Muslim hate crime does rise too'.* She added '*On my birthday, a group of white men shouted at me and my sister 'you Muslim scums, supporters of ISIS, tell us how much you hate Britain'.*

Furthermore, national scandals such as the child sexual exploitation scandal in Rotherham by groups of Pakistani men, twisted by the far-right into a 'Muslim' issue or the alleged 'Trojan Horse' scandal in Birmingham framed as a 'jihadist plot' to take over schools, were also highlighted by our participants as 'trigger' events. Hamza noted that *'The child sexual abuse scandal in Rotherham and the Trojan Horse investigation at Birmingham schools saw an increase in anti-Muslim attacks at record levels'.* In the context of the Rotherham scandal, 'Muslim' is deployed in order to cast all Muslims as synonymous with child abusers and indeed participants reported incidents where they were called 'rapists' and 'paedos' – (paedophiles). Ibrahim stated '*I live in Rotherham and the grooming case has portrayed all Pakistani men in Rotherham as paedophiles but what about the Jimmy Saville case? Why did they not mention his colour and religion? This really frustrates me and makes me angry'.* Muhammad argued *'I used to think it was safe to live in Rotherham but now I fear for my life'.* Amin told us *'They used a picture of me on twitter and said 'taxi driver groomer suspended'. I can't even get a job in Rotherham now because of this picture although I was not involved in the Rotherham scandal.'*

A couple of participants pointed out that certain Muslim individuals have failed to condemn these 'trigger' attacks and therefore they were to some extent 'responsible' for the rise in anti-Muslim hostility. Adam argued *'There are Muslims like Anjem Choudary who are proverbial thorns in the side of Islam who refuse to condemn the Woolwich attack and the killings committed by ISIS. More generally, there has been an implicit failing in Islam to defend itself. Muslims do not speak out about the wrong things that people do in Islam. I am comfortable to speak out against the abhorrent actions of ISIS. These people are doing so much damage to the image of Islam that not to speak out is a bad thing'.*

At the same time, some participants highlighted the role of media in reporting of these 'trigger' events as *'adding fuel to the fire'.* Williams and Burnap (2015) argue that the traditional media play a role in 'setting the agenda', 'transmitting the images' and 'claims making' following deviant events of national or international interest.[15]

---

[15] Williams, M. L. and Burnap, P. (2015) 'Cyberhate on social media in the aftermath of Woolwich: A case study in computational criminology and big data' *British Journal of Criminology*.

According to Hanes and Machin (2014), if attitudes towards Muslims are influenced by 'trigger' attacks and by media coverage of these attacks, then this finding fits with the proposition of 'attitudinal shocks,' where a driver of hate crimes is the level of hatred or bigotry for a particular group in society, which may be influenced by media framing and coverage of attacks.[16]

The perceived role of both traditional and social media in promoting anti-Muslim sentiments is evident in the following quotes. Nabeela stated *'I experience anti-Muslim hostility from people based on what they read on the Daily Mail or what they read on Facebook pages by Britain First'.* Kelly argued *'My mother is hostile to my hijab. She watches the news and because of the disproportionate coverage of Islam and terrorism she thinks that this is what Islam is'.* Ahmed noted that '*People will only believe what the media tells them, and 99% it is negative stories about Islam, so that fuels hate crime towards Muslims. Look at how they portrayed the Lee Rigby murder and the Charlie Hebdo shootings, look at how they portrayed the Rotherham grooming case.'* Similarly, Hamza argued that *'Terrorist attacks are not the teachings of Islam but the media do not promote that. The media don't give the opportunity to us to show the true image of Islam, they give airtime to idiots like Anjem Choudary. He does not represent Islam, they know that he will say something controversial, that's why they invite him but why not give me an opportunity or someone who is more appropriate to represent Islam?'*

Relatedly, participants highlighted that people are largely ignorant about the teachings of Islam and that the media do not take sufficient action to educate the public about what 'true' Islam means. Sophie argued that *'Anti-Muslim hate exists because of ignorance about Muslims that is fuelled by the media. People don't understand Muslims because they are not exposed to them. If the only information they get is from the media, then they are naturally going to assume that all Muslims are as bad as ISIS. But if you live next to Mr and Mrs Khan [common Muslim family name] you will realise that Muslims are just normal people'.* Bilal stated *'Islamophobic people are ignorant, close-minded and lack intelligence. I will use a quote by Leo Buscaglia 'Only the weak are cruel. Gentleness can only be expected from the strong'. I forgive a lot of these ignorant people but I do blame certain sections of media. They are the ones who have grabbed these vulnerable people and it's like telling a child 'do not go down there, there's a monster'. Those ignorant people who are reading the Sun and the Daily Mail are like children. They are ignorant, vulnerable individuals'.*

Furthermore, it is important to recognise that the visibility of Islam is key to revealing the individual's Muslim identity and thus triggering online and/or offline anti-Muslim attacks. Indeed, it is well established in the literature that there is a significant

---

[16] Hanes, E. and Machin, S. (2014) 'Hate Crime in the Wake of Terror Attacks: Evidence from 7/7 and 9/11' *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice* 30: 247-267.

relationship between being visible as a Muslim and experiencing anti-Muslim hate crime (see Allen et al., 2013; Zempi and Chakraborti, 2014).[17] In this context, if the markers of Islam (for example, a Muslim dress or a Muslim name) are absent, 'passing' as a non-Muslim is possible for those without conspicuous Muslim names or dress, and those who do not 'look like' a Muslim. Correspondingly, participants were convinced that it was their distinctive Muslim appearance that made them a target of anti-Muslim hate. Sarah stated *'I reverted to Islam three years ago when I was 40 years old, and within a week I started wearing the hijab and abaya. Prior to wearing the hijab and abaya, I've experienced no problems at all.* Sophie pointed out *'I have a public twitter account to promote my work and I get regular abuse on that. I have my picture on my twitter account so they know I am Muslim … I started wearing the hijab two years ago. I was not a Muslim before. I did not get any online or offline abuse at all before wearing the hijab.'* Similarly, Ibrahim argued *'I am identifiable as a Muslim because I have the full beard, I wear a turban and I also wear the Islamic clothes. I am a very practising Muslim and I feel that is why I am targeted'.* Bilal noted that *'The anti-Muslim hate that I have experienced over many years is because my name gives away my Muslim identity'.* Hamza emphasised that *'The more Muslim you look, the more hostility you will get from people'.*

In addition to the significance of 'trigger' events and the visibility of the Muslim identity, the literature highlights that both race and religion are interlinked in anti-Muslim hate crime (Meer, 2010).[18] Within this framework, the Muslim identity has been subject to a process of racialisation whereby this identity is defined on the basis of the individual's race rather than exclusively on the basis of their religion. Indeed, we found that anti-Muslim hate crime and racism were inextricably intertwined. Participants described incidents where the nature of the abuse they suffered suggested both racism and anti-Muslim hate. Safa argued '*Anti-Muslim hate crime is tied to racism, and the two cannot be divorced from one another. Many people will say 'I am not racist because Islam is not a race' but if the majority of its followers in this country are from an ethnic background, by default they are attacking Muslims on the basis of their race. Actually, 9 out of 10 times, the abuse I receive is based on race. Although they use religion because I am identifiable as a Muslim woman, the words that come out of their mouth have to do with race, so the race and the religion are tied up together in people's minds'.*

---

[17] Allen, C., Isakjee, A. and Young, O. (2013) *Understanding the Impact of Anti-Muslim Hate on Muslim Women*, Birmingham: University of Birmingham.

Zempi, I. and Chakraborti, N. (2014) *Islamophobia, Victimisation and the Veil*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

[18] Meer, N. (2010) *Citizenship, Identity and the Politics of Multiculturalism: The Rise of Muslim Consciousness*, New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Specifically, some participants felt that racism has evolved to anti-Muslim hate crime on the basis that while they were growing up in this country they were abused because of their race whereas in a post-9/11 era, they are abused for being Muslim. Ibrahim noted '*I suffered racism as a child growing up in this country. This is something I had to learn to live with and get used to. I've been chased and beaten up as a child by white youth in Sheffield where I grew up. It became normal. Now it's not racism, it's Islamophobia. Racism is on the back burner and Islamophobia is at the forefront'.* Sarah stated *'My grandmother was Jewish, and during World War II people in Liverpool painted swastikas on her front door. This is not the first time that this has happened in this country. It is just that the group haters new focus is on Muslims. Before it was the Jews, people from Afro-Caribbean countries and the Irish. I am from an Irish background from Liverpool, apart from my grandmother who was Jewish. I used to get comments like 'oh you are with the IRA' but now it's like 'you are a terrorist'.*

From this perspective anti-Muslim hate crime is understood as a 'new' form of racism, which can be attributed to Islamophobic, anti-Muslim attitudes as well as to racist sentiments. In this regard, anti-Muslim hate crime and racism become mutually reinforcing phenomena. However, this is not to overlook the fact that individuals experience online and offline anti-Muslim hate crime because their abusers have been motivated either solely or partially by other factors including gender. For example, Sophie stated '*We are more vulnerable because we stand out more than the men do. It's partly the woman factor and also the fact that I wear a headscarf. People know that I'm definitely a Muslim'.* Aisha stated *'I suffer abuse because I am not just a Muslim woman wearing the hijab. I am also a coloured person'* thereby illustrating the intersectionality amongst race, religion and gender.

Online anti-Muslim hate crime

One of the more disturbing Twitter hashtags that appeared after the Paris shootings in January 2015, was the #KillAllMuslims hashtag. The hashtag, which was 'trending' in the UK, was accompanied by a number of provocative and racist comments targeting Muslims and Islam. Similarly, after the terrorist attack in Tunisia, a number of messages indicating online anti-Muslim hate were shared on social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, MySpace, Hi5 and Bebo. Some examples of hate messages have been documented below.

Selection of Social Media Posts collected after Paris attack

Follow Smoke @FollowSmoke2 · Jan 8
You deserve to **burn a mosque** today...Send them out of their hideyholes!

1:40 PM - 8 Jan 2015 · Details

Mr B @colbarker1 · Jan 8
Release big man #muzrats

Dallas Truth @Dallastruth · Jan 9
Can we have a new holocaust only this time with Muslims! I don't think anyone would care! #fuckmuslims #mohammadwasafag #ParisShooting

1
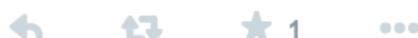
BluRay retweeted

James Bond 007 @EnglandsTerrier · 1h
Ban Islam #JeSuisCharlie #Bluehand

↩   ⟲ 9   ★ 5   •••   View more photos and videos

---

jesuischarlie @jesuischarlie1   4h
Make tomorrow #AttackAMosqueDay.
Mosques will be infested with
#Muslim vermin tomorrow. Make the
sewer rats pay. #JeSuisCharlie

↩   ⟲   ★   +👤

---

jesuischarlie @jesuischarlie1   1d
Fill your car with Calor gas cannisters,
park it next to a mosque, light the fuse
then leave. #JeSuisCharlie
#KillAllMuslims #ParisShooting

↩   ⟲ 2   ★ 1   +👤

---

jesuischarlie @jesuischarlie1   1d
We must compile a hitlist of every
Muslim in Britain: home addresses,
where their kids go to school etc.
#JeSuisCharlie #KillAllMuslims

↩   ⟲ 1   ★   +👤

---

jesuischarlie @jesuischarlie1   1d
Drive your car into crowds of Muslims
as they exit the mosques on Friday.
#JeSuisCharlie #KillAllMuslims

Lew Lew The Zulu @LewisKerfoot11 · Jun 27

Im not racist but hearing what I've just heard about the attacks in France and
Tunisia makes me fucking hate Muslims even more rot in hell 😡

FAVORITE
1

10:32 AM - 27 Jun 2015 · Details

paul allan @agentdarkshadow · Jun 27

@SkyNews never mind **Tunisia** what about Bradford, Luton, High Wycombe,
Slough etc where we **are** just turning a blind eye to these **Muslim scum**!

FAVORITE
1

2:18 PM - 27 Jun 2015 · Details

Mark oneill @exmil109 · Jun 27

Tunisia attack: Majority of dead were British, says Tunisian PM, i see the
murdering **Muslim scum are** at it again. bbc.co.uk/news/uk-332974...

🔲 BBC News (UK)

Tunisia attack: Britain must prepare for high death toll, PM warns -...
By **BBC News (UK)** @BBCNews

The public must be prepared for a high British death toll following the attack on a
Tunisian beach resort, Prime Minister David Cameron says.

View on web

Imogen ☾ ✪ ☪ @swtimogenation 🀄 ✿ ☦ ☪ · Jun 29
BRITAIN IS UNITED IN WANTING THEIR COUNTRY BACK FROM ALL THE
MUZRATS @David_Cameron

BBC Politics @BBCPolitics
Britain is "united in shock and grief", the prime minister says, as it emerged
the British death toll in the... bbc.in/1g0Jexb

↩ ♻ 2   ★ 2   +👤   •••

17

GOD (official) @GODthegoodone · Jun 26
Confirmed 19 dead in **Tunisia**.
Killed by **MUSLIMS**.

Youre a fucking joke!
CUNTS
CUNTS
CUNTS
CUNTS
CUNTS

AN EMBARRASSMENT TO THE HUMAN RACE!

↩ ♺ ★ 3 ➕ •••

Mick @lordkyte · Jun 26
Them pesky **muzrats** at it again

FAVORITE
1

12:43 PM - 26 Jun 2015 · Details

↩ ♺ ★ ➕ •••

1 Muslim Brain Cell @BrainlessMuzzos · Jul 4
Every one of these places was devastated by **Muslims**.

So keep away from Muslim countries. Don't feed Islam.

independent.co.uk/news/world/mid...

⚡ The Independent

Campaign uses London 7/7 bombing image as it urges tourists to...
A provocative advertising campaign featuring images of terror attacks in Western capitals urges tourists not to abandon Tunisia in the wake of its own terror attack.

View on web

↩ ♺ 3 ★ 2 ➕ •••

As discussed earlier, 'trigger' events such as the terrorist attacks in Tunisia, Paris and the murder of British Army soldier Lee Rigby in Woolwich have fuelled the growth of anti-Muslim hostility on social media as well as in the streets of Britain. According to Tell MAMA (2015)[19], there has been a significant spike in anti-Muslim attacks, ranging from online threats, incitement and harassment to actual physical attacks and arson in public, post the Tunisia and Paris events.

Moreover, local and regional events such as the Rotherham child sexual exploitation scandal in the UK and the activities of ISIS militants, such as the murder of British aid worker David Haines in September 2014 have perpetuated anti-Muslim sentiments and 'legitimised' anti-Muslim attacks both online and offline (Feldman et al., 2013).[20] Evidence also shows that anti-Muslim hate crime has increased online, in particular against Muslim women, for example, via social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram (Awan, 2014)[21].

Within this context, Muslim women are also deemed to be part of the 'Islamic problem'. This was true, when discussing the hijab and niqab and the comments used to describe Muslim women as a 'national security threat'. The hate images and posts in particular contained a number of loaded generalisations with respect to Muslim women and Muslim communities. As a result, whilst it may look as though only Muslim women are considered a 'threat', it in fact shows that the perpetrators of online hate messages stereotype and demonise all Muslims in the same manner, and therefore consider them as a group that should be ostracised, deported or killed by using hostile imagery and depicting them in an innately negative fashion.[22] For example, Hira mainly uses Facebook but had to make her online profile private because of the consistent online anti-Muslim abuse she has suffered. She noted that '*I have had to re-adjust all my security settings, so that only friends can contact me or see my profile because of the abuse I have suffered.*'

This sense of fear and pervading insecurity online is also personified by Kelly, who stated that '*These trolls are not the stereotyped EDL, they come from all walks of life and all backgrounds which is alarming. They will set up a hoax ID and from there they can abuse anyone with complete anonymity and hiding behind a false ID.*' The relentless online abuse Sophie suffered was because of her 'visible' presence online as a white Muslim convert. She told us that '*People will message me and try to start*

---

[19] See *TELL MAMA 2014/2015 Findings on Anti-Muslim Hate*, http://tellmamauk.org/ (accessed 3 August 2015).

[20] See Feldman, M., Littler, M., Dack, J., and Copsey, N. (2013). *Anti-Muslim Hate Crime and the Far Right*, Teeside University, http://tellmamauk.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/antimuslim2.pdf (accessed: 4 September 2013).

[21] Awan, I. (2014) 'Islamophobia on Twitter: A Typology of Online Hate Against Muslims on Social Media' *Policy & Internet* 6 (2): 133-150.

[22] See Iganski, P. (2008). *'Hate Crime' and the City,* Bristol: The Policy Press.

arguments, for example, a troll messaged me to say that we are all a bunch of terrorists, and that we have been brainwashed to convert to Islam.' Halima has also been the victim of the EDL cyber mob and had to report the online abuse that she had suffered because of the direct threats that were made to her life. In Halima's case, an EDL sympathiser had threatened her with physical violence. Below is the conversation that took place online:

'Hahahhahaa I told you my agenda hunny. Don't worry I will knock you out.' 'Babe let's do a meet and greet. We're not far from each other.' 'Save your smart mouth for Saturday. I can't wait.' Online spaces often leave a footprint that is difficult to erase and can cause a lot of damage when images and pictures are used to target individuals. For example, Halima had her picture tweeted, with the accompanying text: *'You Burqa wearing slut.'* As noted above, the use of pictures can magnify the abuse and hostility victims suffer online. The above case is not an isolated one as Amin has also suffered similar online anti-Muslim abuse. In his case, an image was used of him with the caption; 'suspended child grooming taxi drivers', despite the post being false and malicious. Amin stated that '*I don't even have a beard but they targeted me. I reported it to the police but they weren't interested. They should have protected me but they didn't.'* The examples below also show how Twitter has been used as a vehicle for individuals to create a 'them versus us' narrative.

Steveeee.
@SteveWarner93

Follow

Muslims want to take over Britain.. Yeah nice one sandu now fuck off before i burn your turban ya mug
#smallamountofwankers

davymaccas
@davymaccas

Follow

Never do we see in the media Muslims attacking whites, why? Fucking animals need to be sent back to where shit runs thorough the streets.

Fatima has also suffered online abuse on her Twitter account on numerous occasions. In one case, she was targeted online by someone who said '*Go f***k yourself, go f***k a goat, you Islamic extremist piece of SHIT!*' For Fatima, the comments did not stop there, as she was targeted further by internet trolls on Twitter. She stated that '*I was called a Muzlamic and I needed sense f...king into me.*'

Fatima did not feel confident enough to report this incident to the police, because of fear that she would not be taken seriously. She stated '*I felt I wouldn't be taken seriously by the police. I also felt embarrassed and it made me feel uncomfortable. I also wasn't 100% sure if it was an offence online.*'

Ahmed had also received similar offensive comments via a group of people on Facebook who posted comments such as '*filthy fukkas.*' '*F…king dirty pakis, this why I want British to be about British.*' These examples show that online comments are contributing towards the stigmatisation and the 'othering' of Muslim communities.[23] The online prejudice and discrimination paradigm is used by perpetrators who will involve swearing coupled with anti-Muslim, racist language as a means to target Muslims. This online element is also used by perpetrators where prejudicial statements and messages are used to target a particular group or person. Indeed, this type of negativity can also lead to an escalation of online abuse and the normalisation of such behaviour through likes and retweets via social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook.[24] However, as we shall see below, both online and offline incidents can have a similar pattern and a trend, which is based primarily on the perpetrator using abusive and provocative language to pose real offline threats against victims, their families and wider Muslim communities.

---

[23] Awan, I., and Blakemore, B. (2012). *Policing Cyber Hate, Cyber Threats and Cyber Terrorism*, Ashgate: Farnham.

[24] Keats, D. (2014). *Hate Crimes in Cyberspace*, Harvard University Press.

Offline anti-Muslim hate crime

Similarly to the virtual world, where actual and potential victims are identified through the visibility of their Muslim identity, Muslims are equally vulnerable to intimidation, violence and abuse on the street, particularly when their Muslim identity is visible offline.[25] Evidence suggests that 'visible' Muslims – such as Muslim men with a beard and Muslim women who wear hijab or niqab – are at heightened risk of anti-Muslim hostility in public by virtue of their visible 'Muslimness'.[26] Specifically, popular perceptions that veiled Muslim women are passive, oppressed and powerless increase their chance of assault, thereby marking them as an 'easy' target to attack[27]. We found that whilst online stereotypes were used to depict Muslims in a negative manner, in the physical world such effects were used to characterise Muslims with strong verbal abuse.

For example, Sarah noted how '*When I became identifiably Muslim I got nasty looks, threats and abuse, and that's an everyday experience, especially because I am a white British Muslim.*' These views were reinforced by comments that were made against Sarah who on a daily basis had to hear the following comments '*Oh you are a Paki lover.*' These comments were not isolated to Sarah, but a number of other participants had also experienced racist abuse, which they suffered because of their visible identification as Muslim. Ahmed stated that '*They call me 'terrorist', they call me 'Paki', I've been told 'Fuck off go away', I get sworn at, and that's mainly because I'm Muslim. The thing is, I am born in this country. I want to live here.*' Mohammad talked about how his children have also been targeted by anti-Muslim abuse in schools. He noted that '*Other pupils call them names like 'Paki get lost', swearing, 'go back home', 'you don't belong here', 'Muslim monkeys', other pupils have pulled their headscarves.*' Sophie stated that '*On my previous school placement, my hijab was sharply pulled by a child, this was witnessed by a teacher but was not challenged by them*'. Along similar lines, Hamza stated that '*I was called a 'Muslim groomer*' while Mohammad also argued that '*I have been called 'Muslim terrorist' and 'Here come's Osama Bin Laden*'.

We found that such notions create a polarisation and a 'them versus us narrative', which is used to stereotype Muslims as being 'dangerous' and a 'threat' to public safety and national security. This was personified by many participants who felt they were unfairly labelled as 'terrorists', 'radicals' and 'extremists'. Kelly told us that '*I have been called a 'Muslim bomber' on numerous occasions. I have now started wearing a hat on top of my hijab because I can go about my business with the hat*

---

[25] Allen, C., Isakjee, A. and Young, O. (2013) *Understanding the Impact of Anti-Muslim Hate on Muslim Women*, Birmingham: University of Birmingham.
[26] Taras, R. (2012). *Xenophobia and Islamophobia in Europe*, Edinburgh University Press.
[27] Zempi, I. and Chakraborti, N. (2014) *Islamophobia, Victimisation and the Veil*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

on.' Her views were not isolated as Bilal argued that '*I travel a lot and I always get stopped at airports, I can't understand it. They stop me and nobody else.'* We found that such feelings and perceptions of anti-Muslim hostility can have an impact on the government's overall community cohesion strategy.

Another account of anti-Muslim hostility was experienced by Faisal, who would pray in a shed outside the food store, where he worked as a security guard, leaving the door of the shed wide open. On one occasion Faisal reported how the assistant manager went outside and locked the door of the shed knowing that Faisal was inside praying. Faisal continuously banged on the door but had no response. He then called the shop at which point the assistant manager answered the phone and he asked them to open the door. Faisal stated that '*They threatened me and said 'go back to your own country, you are Osama Bin Laden.'* Faisal added that '*They snatched my phone and were very aggressive towards me…They really bullied me and told me 'go home' and that they didn't want me in this country.'*

Hira was on the train when a group of men began verbally and physically abusing her. In this case, the perpetrators kept waving alcoholic drinks and an unknown substance in her face and asking her if she wanted some, and also asking her if she 'eats bacon' or if she has 'a bomb under her scarf'. This continued with a chant, 'we are racist, we are racist and we love it.' They also started shouting 'Do it with the nun, it's better than having none' and continued to point at her and ridicule her. Hira stated that '*They started chanting 'Do it with the nun, its' better than having none…I asked the person abusing me to stop but he wouldn't. Then they dropped alcohol on my coat.'*

Asma suffered a similar experience when she worked as a midwife but now works to help Muslim women as victims of violence. She stated that '*I was on a Maternity ward and one of my patients at night shift was in labour when she saw me with my hijab she swore at me. She shouted at me 'I don't want my baby to see your terrorist face. I don't want my child to come to this world and see someone like you a terrorist. Leave my country! How dare, you come to my ward and show your ugly face. I then left my job as a midwife as I felt a lot of people hate me.'* On another occasion she stated that '*I once got the bus and the driver said to me 'I hate your black face, I hate your accent, I hate your headscarf, you f…king terrorist.'*

A number of participants spoke about the disturbing nature of verbal and physical violence that they had suffered. Sophie who wears the hijab noted '*a guy walked past, he spat at me and called me 'Muzzi'. Also, I've been called dirty paki [I'm white] a group of guys walked past and shouted 'speak English in our country'. I was looking at a map and did not say anything.'* This culminated in further physical violence, for example, she stated that '*I was waiting for the bus and they pulled my hijab but no one stepped in.'*

She added that *'I started wearing the hijab two years ago. I was not a Muslim before [reverting to Islam]. I did not get any online or offline abuse at all before wearing the hijab…It's like a flashing light now, it's like alert-alert everyone!'* Ibrahim also wears traditional Islamic clothing and stated that *'I was walking on the road and I got punched.'* Mohammad also reported that '*I have had problems from my neighbours. When I moved in, they wrote racist slogans on the walls of my house, they threw a brick at the window, they broke my car.'*

We argue that such behaviours can become normalised by offenders who use it to target, and call for violent action, against Muslims and Islam.[28] For example, Safa has been called '*F…king Paki, F…king Slag, let's blow her face off.'* Safa added that the name calling did not stop there and included physical violence. She stated that '*It didn't stop them from slapping me against my face, pulling my headscarf and kicking me on the left side on my hips.'* Like most victims of hate crime, Safa felt too scared to report the incident to the police '*I was scared to report it initially but when I did the police response was so poor and I felt humiliated even though someone had threatened to blow my face off.'*

Nabeela stated that '*A man ran up to me in and spat in my face twice because I am Muslim. He accused me and my people in the Middle East of killing 'them' and killing 'Christians.'* For Hira the man in the seat next to her poked her ribs and shoulder a couple of times whilst Asma had also suffered physical aggression and violence towards her. She stated that '*When I was walking to the shops a man behind me pulled my hijab and strangled me but no one stood up for me and he said to me 'Are you going to bomb Boots?'* On another occasion Asma stated that: '*I was in a shop and a woman came behind me and removed my headscarf in this queue. She pulled it off!'* Whilst many of the female participants were victims of abuse whereby perpetrators pulled their hijab or spat at them, for male participants this included people pulling their beards. For example, Faisal directly cited examples of when past line managers expressed concerns about his appearance, as well as instances where customers have pulled his beard and subjected him to racist, anti-Muslim comments. He added '*It has been tough.'* Below, the report will consider in more detail the impacts of online and offline anti-Muslim hate.

---

[28] Perry, B. (2001). *In the Name of Hate: Understanding Hate Crimes*, London: Routledge.

Impacts of online and offline anti-Muslim hate crime

Crime can incur a number of different 'costs' following a victimisation experience that involve emotional, psychological, physical and financial liabilities. However, evidence shows that 'hate crimes hurt more'. Smith et al. (2012) via their analysis of the BCS (2009/10 and 2010/11) found that, compared to non-hate crime victims, victims of hate crime were statistically significantly more likely to say that they were emotionally affected by the incident (86 per cent compared to 92 per cent), and more likely to be 'very much' affected (17 per cent compared to 38 per cent).[29] In particular, 67% experience anger; 50% annoyance; 40% shock; 39% fear; 35% loss of confidence/vulnerability; 23% anxiety; 20% depression; and 17% record difficulty sleeping. In the context of anti-Muslim hate crime, both online and offline attacks upon Muslims 'hurt' more than 'normal' crimes as they are seen as an attack upon the victims' Muslim identity. From this perspective, the impact of anti-Muslim hate crime may exceed that of 'normal' crime because of victims' perceived and actual vulnerability due to their affiliation to Islam.

We found that participants suffered a range of psychological and emotional responses to anti-Muslim hate, from lowered self-confidence and insecurity to depression, isolation and anxiety. Given that they were targeted because of the 'visibility' of their Muslim identity – which is easily identifiable because of their Muslim name and/or Muslim appearance either in the virtual world or in the physical sphere – participants were unable to take comfort in the belief that what happened to them was simply random and 'could have happened to anyone'. Rather, they were forced to view this abuse as an attack on their Muslim identity and this had severe implications for their levels of confidence and self-esteem as well as their feelings of belonging and safety in the UK.

As might be expected, experiences of online and offline anti-Muslim hate crime increased feelings of vulnerability, fear and insecurity amongst participants. Ahmed stated '*It is scary because we are constantly under attack.*' Specifically, participants highlighted the relationship between online and offline anti-Muslim hate crime, and described living in fear because of the possibility of online threats materialising in the 'real world'. Aisha told us '*I am scared, I fear for my life because at the end of the day they [perpetrators online] might come and find me because my twitter profile is public*'. Along similar lines, Adam argued '*I know many Muslims who have been physically attacked and verbally attacked. Personally, I have been called 'Muslim scum', 'jihadist' and 'paedophile'. I have been bullied and slandered on a forum online. People call Prophet Mohammad a 'paedophile', and they often say to me that 'we [Muslims] believe in a paedophile'. There is a popular misconception that one of Prophet Mohammad's wives was a child bride. By association, I have been called a*

---

[29] Smith, K., Lader, D., Hoare, J. and Lau, I. (2012) *Hate Crime, Cyber Security and the Experience of Crime Among Children: Findings From the 2010/11 British Crime Survey*, London: Home Office.

'paedophile'. This was online, they were so nasty and horrible towards me that I did feel fearful to the point I thought that they would turn up at my house, and hurt me and my family because they knew who I was and where I lived'.

The internet allows people to take on a new and anonymous identity, and to bypass traditional editorial controls, to share their views with millions. Online anti-Muslim hate messages can be sent anonymously or by using a false identity, making it difficult to identify the offender. The anonymity aspect in cases of online anti-Muslim hate messages is extremely frightening as the perpetrator could be anyone and the online threats can escalate into the physical space. Aisha stated '*I am scared because in face-to-face situations I can see who the perpetrator is but when someone does it online I always think who is it? Who is hiding behind the keyboard sending me messages of hate?*'

Repeat incidents of offline and/or online anti-Muslim hate increased feelings of insecurity, vulnerability and anxiety amongst our participants. Bowling (2009) states that repeated or persistent victimisation can undermine the security of actual and potential victims, and induce fear and anxiety.[30] The distressing nature of anti-Muslim hate crime coupled with the frequency with which these acts were committed, had created high levels of fear amongst participants. As a result, they felt extremely vulnerable for themselves and they were also concerned about the safety of their family. Ibrahim expressed his fear for the safety of his wife who wears the niqab: '*My wife is very vulnerable when she is on her own. I fear for her safety'.*

A couple of participants warned about the risks of radicalisation, especially for young people as a result of suffering online and/or offline anti-Muslim hate crime. For example, Hamza noted '*Anti-Muslim hate crime has affected Muslims. This is why Muslims are going to Syria. This is why they support ISIS. When people experience Islamophobic abuse, they will be easily radicalised. They feel weak, lonely, isolated, and rejected from British society. This is when these hate preachers pick them up and brainwash them. If you are constantly victimised, you are weak. Jihadi John and others who support ISIS are vulnerable. Vulnerability is the number one factor why Muslims go to Syria. These young people are groomed to go to Syria, groomed to become terrorists, groomed to blow themselves up'.*

Affective responses that were common amongst our participants were isolation, depression, loneliness, and a sense of rejection from wider society. In this regard, experiences of anti-Muslim hate crime have long-lasting effects for victims including making them afraid to engage with other communities and feeling like social outcasts.

---

[30] Bowling, B. (2009) 'Violent Racism: Victimisation, Policing and Social Context' in B. Williams and H. Goodman-Chong (eds.) *Victims and Victimisation: A Reader*, Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Hafsa stated '*I feel very isolated and I have become quite cynical about non-Muslims*'. Similarly, Bilal argued '*Suffering Islamophobia has made me become insular, lack confidence, I feel I am not accepted*'. Asma suggested '*My hijab is my identity but people hate me because I wear a headscarf. Why?*' She added '*My eldest son was studying aeronautical engineering in his second year. He went for a job and they told him 'why do you want to study aeronautics? Is it because you want to blow up a plane?' He has now left his studies. This is our home, we don't want to leave this country but where do we belong?*'

As a result of their recurring experiences of online and offline anti-Muslim hate, participants emphasised that they always had to keep their guard up and be vigilant. In this regard, they felt anxious and were constantly on the alert. Anxiety was usually expressed as excessive fear and worry, which was often coupled with feelings of tension, restlessness and vigilance. Ibrahim said '*You might find it bizarre but when I walk on the street I am always watching out in case anything happens. I am a big guy, six-feet tall, I stand out as a sore thumb. Sometimes people look at me with disgust.*' Fatima argued '*When I get abuse online it's something powerful about the words they use and it does hurt as it's full of hate. It has made me feel unsafe and always looking over my shoulder in case they find where I live*'.

The continual threat of online and offline abuse can be emotionally draining for victims who feel the need to be constantly on the alert, even to the extent that they might become paranoid. Hamza argued '*I have become paranoid possibly because I know that Islamophobia is so big*'. Bilal stated '*To be honest, I have slowed down with my openness on twitter because I feel very unsafe, I feel very vulnerable. There was a time I felt so vulnerable just being in the UK because of my twitter account. I became paranoid, that everybody might be watching me, the government, people, everyone really*'.

A key finding throughout interviews was that participants were multiple and repeat victims of both online and offline forms of anti-Muslim hate crime. Rarely did participants describe anti-Muslim hate crime as 'one-off'; rather there was always the sense, the fear, the expectation of another attack. From this perspective, anti-Muslim hate crime and its attendant forms of offline and/or online abuse, intimidation, violence and harassment were seen by the majority of participants as 'normal'. The fact that anti-Muslim hostility was understood as a normative part of their lived experiences also meant that some participants had become 'used to it' and therefore 'immune' to this victimisation. Sarah argued '*When I suffer abuse in public, people walk off or stare. Anti-Muslim hate is normal*'. Similarly, Bilal stated '*I have been called a 'Muslim terrorist' so many times but I have grown a thicker skin as a result*'. Muhammad pointed out '*I am not afraid anymore because I am so used to it. I have to live here so I need to adjust myself to the abuse. If I beat the crap out of them I will be in trouble. I take the abuse and keep my head down. I just want to carry on with*

my life'. Taking a similar view, Sophie said '*In a way I anticipate it to happen so I am not scared. For example, when people are pointing at me from far, I expect them to say or do something when I'm close. It's scary when people have spat at me or pulled my headscarf and I did not see that coming'.* Irfan noted that '*I have accepted it. Anti-Muslim hate is legitimised. The things you can say for the Muslim community and get away with, you can't say for any other community.'*

Furthermore, another cost that victims of anti-Muslim hate crime often experience is a change in their routines and lifestyles. In this case, the threat of both online and offline anti-Muslim hate crime is so 'real' that it can cause individuals to change the way that they live their lives and even take steps to become less 'visibly' Muslim. For example, some participants (for example, Sarah, Kelly, Sophie and Adam) who had converted to Islam explained that they kept their English name to avoid suffering anti-Muslim hostility whilst other participants who were born into Islam had adopted western names in order to hide their Muslim identity, especially online. Moreover, some participants were reluctant to leave the house, especially on their own because of fear of being attacked. Nabeela stated '*We stay in, we don't go out because we are scared of what will happen. If I leave the house I am usually accompanied by my husband or my son'.* Ibrahim argued '*My wife wears the niqab and she had many incidents where people have made nasty remarks, so just to avoid conflict we don't go out.'*

The constant threat of anti-Muslim hate crime had forced participants to adopt a siege mentality and keep a low profile in order to reduce the potential for future attacks. Zempi and Chakraborti (2014) found that veiled Muslim women often try to become less 'visible' and as such less vulnerable by taking the veil off.[31] Similarly, our participants revealed downplaying their 'Muslimness' by taking the veil off, or by dressing in western clothes. Sarah explained '*I do not feel safe to wear the hijab up in my hometown because of the dangers there. I take my hijab and abaya off when I go to my hometown because of the abuse I will get as a result'.* Adam stated '*I do get funny looks on the street because of my beard. When I dress in more traditionally Islamic clothing, for example, when I go to the mosque, I get more insulting, derogatory comments. It makes life easier when I dress in western clothes.'*

In this context, participants appear to manage impressions of their Muslim identity in public and online mainly through concealment with the aim to reduce the risk of future abuse. Perry and Alvi (2012) point out that this is not a voluntary choice, but the 'safe' choice.[32] Whether online or offline, the reality of anti-Muslim hate crime creates 'invisible' boundaries, across which members of the Muslim community are not 'welcome' to step.

---

[31] Zempi, I. and Chakraborti, N. (2014) *Islamophobia, Victimisation and the Veil*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
[32] Perry, B. and Alvi, S. (2012) ''We Are All Vulnerable': The in Terrorism Effects of Hate Crimes'' *International Review of Victimology* 18 (1): 57-71.

The enactment of both virtual and physical boundaries impacts upon 'emotional geographies' in relation to the way in which Muslims perceive the spaces and places around and outside their communities of abode. Rather than risk the threat of being attacked, either online or offline, many actual and potential victims opt to change their lifestyles and retreat to 'their own' communities.

Furthermore, several participants felt angry, upset and frustrated because they were targeted for being Muslim. Hate crime studies have established both specific and generalised frustration and anger on the part of victims – towards the perpetrator and towards a culture of bias and exclusion (see Williams and Tregidga, 2014).[33] Ahmed stated '*It upsets me because Muslims have contributed a lot in this country and we continue to contribute to the economy and to all aspects of life but we are not trusted by the government, the police and the media'*. Bilal argued '*I suffer Islamophobia all the time. People have labelled me as a 'paki bomber' just by looking at me, which makes me very angry. I feel I have to pay for something that it is not even my fault'*. Irfan suggested '*As an individual, I have a very strong character but I do feel upset when it happens. I have not done anything wrong. I have never committed a crime. Why am I attacked? Why are all Muslims persecuted? Every time a lunatic who claims to be a Muslim goes and blows himself up or kills somebody we get the blame for it'*.

Clearly some participants felt frustrated but they also felt weak, powerless and defenceless on the basis that they were not 'allowed' to challenge anti-Muslim hate crime. Hamza argued '*When incidents like the Charlie Hebdo happen, I am asked to condemn it and I do condemn it, not only as a Muslim but also as a human being, but when attacks against Muslims happen, no one asks me to condemn it. That is Islamophobia for me and it is very upsetting. Attacks like the Charlie Hebdo are un-Islamic, inhumane and completely unacceptable but I am offended, I don't see how I, as an individual who already suffers Islamophobia, need to accept such cartoons that insult our Prophet, who we will love more than anybody else. People don't understand why are offended. It's like we are not allowed to be offended. If I said I am offended, I would suffer more Islamophobia. That's why we stay quiet. We condemn the killings but we stay quiet about speaking out against Islamophobia. We are not allowed to speak out. I don't support the killings, but I don't support the cartoons either. We feel helpless'*.

Finally, a couple of participants pointed out that anti-Muslim hate experiences made their faith in Islam stronger. In this regard, Islam became a more salient and important marker of identity in response to experiences of online and/or offline anti-Muslim hate crime.

---

[33] Williams, M. and Tregidga, J. (2014) 'Hate Crime Victimisation in Wales: Psychological and Physical Impacts Across Seven Hate Crime Victim-Types' *British Journal of Criminology* 54 (4): 946-967.

Such experiences increased in-group solidarity and identification with their religious identity. Brown (2001) observes that as Muslim identities have been constructed as 'other' to western identities, an attempt to distort Muslim identities, or to suppress the symbols of these identities, often has the opposite effect; it strengthens these identities.[34] For some participants, suffering anti-Muslim hate crimes made them more determined to continue to practise Islam. Bilal stated '*Islamophobia has pushed me closer to practising Islam. I am more passionate now about my Muslim identity. I feel I don't belong anywhere else'.* Asma suggested 'I love my hijab more when they attack me for it'. Sophie noted '*For me Islam is a way of life. It is identity and belonging. I enjoy being part of Islam. It gives me a sense of family and belonging. I brush aside all the abuse.'*

---

[34] Brown, M. D. (2001) 'Multiple Meanings of the Hijab in Contemporary France' in W. J. F. Keenan (ed.) *Dressed to Impress: Looking the Part*, Oxford: Berg.

Recommendations

Our aim throughout this report has been victim focused and as such, this section is used to empower the people we interviewed by giving those voices a platform whereby they can make suggestions on what should be done to help prevent anti-Muslim hate. In particular, we want to bring those who have experienced anti-Muslim hate together to collectively share their views, beliefs and attitudes in terms what recommendations they view as being important to them. Therefore this part of the report aims to highlight these 'voices' and we hope that policy makers, the police, victim support, communities and other agencies and stakeholders concerned with anti-Muslim hate crime will use these recommendations as a means to create safer communities in Britain.

1. Anti-Muslim Hate must be challenged from within Muslim communities

Many of the victims we spoke to felt that anti-Muslim hate is not taken seriously enough and recommended that the Muslim community itself be much more confident in recognising, reporting and challenging such incidents. They felt that the community itself could provide help and support to victims of anti-Muslim hate crime. For example, Hafsa stated '*Change needs to come from within the Muslim community...We must change this.*' In particular, participants suggested this could be achieved whereby the community look for signs from within that might highlight when someone has been targeted and provide support for them. One of the ways this could be achieved could include better resources and educational toolkits placed at mosques and community centres, which communities could use and share.

Sarah stated that '*As a convert to Islam it's an eye opener for me but other people, especially Asians have experienced this everyday in their lives; they had to put up with this their entire lives. Some people are too afraid to speak out about it and say 'This is unacceptable' because they feel this is the price they have to pay for living in this country. We should not be afraid to stand up and challenge anti-Muslim hate. The community needs to stand up and actually start reporting this and say 'Look, this is what our reality looks like, this is what we face'. The only way to change things is to stand up for it and challenge people. Until then we will continue to live like this.*'

This is an important consideration and one that Safa also agreed with. She stated that: '*We need to make people more aware of these issues, victims must report the abuse. Tell MAMA are doing a great job but we need the different Muslim communities to stand together.*' However, our study did find that for some participants this is not easy, and therefore any sort of work here would require

inward thinking and a longer-term solution, such as helping victims improve their levels of confidence. For example, highlighting the levels of successful prosecutions and creating better awareness of the support mechanisms for victims could assist. Hamza added *'If we say anything we are only going to make it worse. That's why we keep quiet'*. Sadly, the reality is that for most victims of hate crime reporting it to the police or to other formal agencies can be a barrier. Some of these barriers include shame, embarrassment, fear of retribution, stereotyping from the police and also stigma attached from within communities.

Kelly, however noted that *'It is important Muslims log everything and victims and offenders are reported to the appropriate agencies. Logging includes from every bad word to hostile look. If we ignore it, it will only get worse. I also disagree with the victim mentality because it pretends it is not happening. We need to address the situation.'* Hira also added *'People need to speak about this issue and speak up. Unfortunately, a lot of people isolate themselves and don't speak up.'* We suggest that anti-Muslim hate crime resources, packages and a website be designed for communities to share their stories and also have links to appropriate advice and sources so as to give victims much more confidence that they can report the abuse. We argue this should be more centralised and be available for communities and easy to access both online and offline.

2. Media training around reporting stories to do with Muslims

Many of the participants noted how anti-Muslim hate and the way in which it is sometimes reported could have an impact on the way people view Muslims and Islam. Indeed, we also argue that this can be seen as problematic in particular when the public may not be aware of what Islam stands for. Allen (2012)[35] found that 64% of the British public claim that they do know about Muslims and what they do know is 'acquired through the media'. In a survey conducted in September 2013 by BBC Radio 1 Newsbeat of 18-24 year-olds, they found that from the 1,000 people questioned, 28% of young people believed Britain would be a safer place with fewer Muslims and 44% of people felt Muslims did not share the same values as the rest of Britain.[36] Interestingly, the people questioned did state that anti-Muslim hate existed in mainstream politics and within the media.

They also blamed terrorist groups abroad for this image (26%), and the media was second place at (23%) for depicting Muslims in a negative light and finally, British Muslims who had committed acts of terrorism were ranked at 21%.

---

[35] Allen, C. (2012) *A Review of the evidence relating to the representation of Muslims and Islam in the British Media.* University of Birmingham: Institute of Applied Social Studies**,** School of Social Policy.
[36] See Kotecha, S. (2013) 'Quarter of young British people 'do not trust Muslims'*', BBC News*, http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsbeat/24204742 (accessed: 12 December 2013).

Relatedly, Sarah told us that '*We need a powerful counter narrative happening and this needs to be supported by politicians and the mass media*' whilst Fatima stated that '*The media need to do much more and have an active role in this.*' Sophie noted '*We need more balanced reporting from the media. Misinformation about Muslims on the media is a big-big issue.*' Ibrahim added '*I am a taxi driver, it's always on my mind what customers will think when I pick them up. That's why I try to be an ambassador for Muslims. I explain to customers that what they see in the media is rubbish. But I should not have to do that. I should not need to justify other people's actions.*'

Particularly striking was a recent news report published by the Daily Express on the 10th anniversary of the 7/7 attacks in London, which claimed that there had been an increase in the number of Muslims who 'sympathised' with ISIS.[37] The story appeared to be based on a poll commissioned by the Daily Mirror about a possible terrorist attack and included a survey about peoples age, location and social class. However, there was no discussion of religious beliefs. Shortly after, the news story was taken down. Mohammad told us that the 'Some sections of the media play a massive role in promoting anti-Muslim hate; they always give wrong information about Islam' and Adam added that '*We are so demonised that we need to explicitly state that we disagree with the actions of ISIS. Unless we do that, people do not know where we agree or not. Also, a softening approach on the part of the media would help. We should not be held responsible for the actions of people who commit crimes in the name of Islam.*' We believe that training workshops for media professionals with input from the community could help eradicate some of these issues surrounding media stories and bias. These workshops could also include seminars and be conducted by people working with Muslim communities in order to try and better understand the implications of media sensationalism. We also argue that fines could be imposed where stories are reported inaccurately which aim to demonise and stigmatise Muslim communities.

3. **The police can improve the way in which they handle cases of anti-Muslim hate crime**

Our findings suggest that many victims of anti-Muslim abuse feel that they are not taken seriously enough by the police and other similar agencies when they report abuse.

The victims we interviewed spoke about how they had been let down by the police when they reported such incidents. For example, Safa stated that '*I did go to the police station and filed a report and a statement but I was told there was 0.1% chance they would find these girls.*' In Safa's case she was verbally and physically

---

[37] Kesvani, H. (2015) The Daily Express Deleted A False Story That Claimed Half Of British Muslims Support ISIS, *Buzzfeed,* http://www.buzzfeed.com/husseinkesvani/uk-newspaper-british-muslim-isis (accessed 4 August 2015).

assaulted by a group of white girls but she felt that the police did not take her seriously enough. In some cases, the way the police dealt with their case had impacted upon people's perceptions of safety and also whether or not they would report another incident. Sophie stated '*The police need to take anti-Muslim hate more seriously. I feel the police don't really care. When I was younger I had rocks thrown at me and I was actually hit and bruised at the back, and I reported it to the police and they were like 'oh we will go to their house and tell them don't do it again.' This experience put me off reporting future incidents.*' Safa was physically assaulted and when she reported it to the police the response was 'poor' and she felt 'humiliated'. We argue that the police are working to help victims but in cases where their response is poor, inevitably, this will have an impact on whether victims report incidents because of a lack of confidence and trust in the police. Sarah appreciated these difficulties and stated that 'they are understaffed and under resourced and they don't have the capacity to investigate these issues' and Ahmed wanted to see '*police officers being trained about anti-Muslim hate crime. In the same way they set up taskforces to tackle radicalisation and extremism, they need to set up a taskforce to tackle anti-Muslim hate crime.*' Clearly, victims of anti-Muslim hate crime should be treated with respect, empathy and dignity, taking into account their religious and cultural needs. Key agencies such as the police are crucial in displaying those characteristics.

4. The public should intervene and assist victims of anti-Muslim hate

A number of participants spoke about the lack of intervention and assistance from bystanders. As a result, a number of participants told us that they had suffered anti-Muslim prejudice and hostility but people usually remained silent and did not assist victims during or after the ordeal. Crucially, the victims spoke about not seeking direct intervention or action but just merely contacting the appropriate services such as the police, which would have benefited them greatly. Sophie stated that '*I was on the bus and a man shouted to me and my Muslim friends 'Oh you are terrorists, I'm gonna come to the back of the bus and stab you'. I told the bus driver about this and asked him to stop the bus and call the police but he refused. He said 'I am driving the bus, I am just the driver, what do you want me to do about it?*'

Another participant Hira was on a train when a group of men began harassing her and dropped alcohol on her coat. However, she insists that the train was full and yet people remained in their seats without offering any sort of assistance or challenging the perpetrator.
Hira stated that '*people were watching but they ignored it. No one wanted to help.*' Such feelings of helplessness can have grave consequences for victims of anti-Muslim hate crime and can decrease their levels of confidence in reporting future incidents. We argue that tackling anti-Muslim hate crime should not solely be left to

the individual but that we as a society help to tackle this issue when we see it happening by helping victims and reporting the incident to the police.

5. Anti-Muslim hate crime awareness and visibility

We found that a number of participants were not aware of the term 'anti-Muslim hate crime', 'online hate crime' and 'hate crime' in general. In particular, for those who had experienced online abuse, a number of people were unsure of whether they had been victims of hate crime. For example, a number of participants had in fact suffered hate crime with direct individual threats made against them. Despite this, they were not aware of this or had little if any information on what they should do. Safa stated that '*We need to create awareness and stop blaming the victims*.' When asked what type of awareness people wanted to see, participants in general stated that they would like to see workshops, advertisements, posters, flyers, reports and other information which they felt should be shared with mosques, community centres, businesses, shops, supermarkets, cafes and schools.

6. Social media companies should make their systems of reporting hate crime more user friendly

A number of participants spoke about their anger and frustration at reporting online abuse that they had suffered. Fatima stated that '*Social media companies do not act quickly enough*.' In some cases the material was removed but reappeared and in other cases social media companies refused to take action because the abuse did not breach their specific community standards. We argue that companies such as Twitter and Facebook could use a specific section or button that includes reporting racism, bigotry, hate crime, hate speech and prejudice. The current reporting system around targeted hate should include a contextual analysis of why and how this abuse occurred. A number of participants we spoke to reported being targeted by multiple accounts and that some users had simply changed names or were hiding behind detection. In those cases, participants argued that social media companies had not done enough to track or prevent these users from continuing to use their services.

7. Diversity in the criminal justice system

Our research found that a more inclusive and diverse criminal justice system would allow some victims to feel more confident in reporting incidents of anti-Muslim hate. This was particularly striking when participants discussed the need for Muslim role models and a more diverse criminal justice system. For example, Sarah stated that '*It is important to have positive role models and break down people's assumptions and prejudices about Islam. I have a duty to my faith community to continue to wear the hijab and abaya, and be visibly identifiable as a Muslim*.' We argue that agencies such as Victim Support, the police, the judiciary and other key stakeholders should

have a more diverse and representative sample from within communities such as the wider Muslim communities.

8. Challenging anti-Muslim rhetoric and engaging schools in the debate

We argue that the language around anti-Muslim hate should be challenged within schools as a means to help young people better understand the consequences of anti-Muslim hate. For example, this could be done through the use of posters that both highlight specific terms and create awareness for young people that anti-Muslim hate is not 'cool'. We strongly argue that this could be done through workshops, graffiti classroom based lessons, in assemblies and in the classroom with activities and rewards for people who are able to engage with this debate in an open and safe space. We feel a marketing campaign here such as: 'I am a Muslim, I may wear a headscarf or have a beard, but I am British and proud of it' could be used as a vehicle to break down barriers.

Conclusion

The preceding discussion has examined the online and offline experiences of anti-Muslim hostility of Muslim men and women in the UK. Specifically, the aim of this report was to examine: (a) the nature and extent of online and offline anti-Muslim hate crime directed towards Muslims in the UK; (b) the impact of this hostility upon victims, their families and wider Muslim communities; (c) offer recommendations on preventing and responding to anti-Muslim hostility. The study included 20 in-depth interviews with Muslims who have been victims of online and offline anti-Muslim hate crimes, and had reported these experiences to Tell MAMA.

Key themes that emerged from the research findings included the determinants of anti-Muslim hate crime incidence, the nature and extent of online and offline anti-Muslim hate crime, and the consequences for victims, their families and wider communities. Correspondingly, we found that the prevalence and severity of online and offline anti-Muslim hate crimes are influenced by 'trigger' events of local, national and international significance. Terrorist attacks carried out by individuals who identify themselves as being Muslim or acting in the name of Islam – such as the Woolwich attack, the atrocities committed by ISIS and attacks around the world such as in Sydney, the Charlie Hebdo attack in Paris, and in Copenhagen and Tunisia – induced a significant increase in participants' online and offline anti-Muslim hate crime experiences. Additionally, national scandals such as the child sexual exploitation in Rotherham by groups of Pakistani men, and the alleged 'Trojan Horse' scandal in Birmingham framed as a 'jihadist plot' to take over schools, were also highlighted by participants as 'trigger' events, which increased their vulnerability to anti-Muslim hostility, both online and offline.

Participants reported suffering anti-Muslim hostility on a daily basis, ranging from online threats and messages of hate to harassment, intimidation and violence in the physical world. They highlighted that the visibility of their Muslim identity was key to being identified as Muslims, and thus triggering online and/or offline anti-Muslim attacks.

Female participants felt more vulnerable to anti-Muslim hate crimes in comparison to male participants, both online and offline. As might be expected, experiences of online and offline anti-Muslim hate crimes increased feelings of vulnerability, fear and insecurity amongst participants. They also suffered a range of psychological and emotional responses such as low confidence, depression and anxiety. Throughout interviews, participants highlighted the relationship between online and offline anti-Muslim hate crimes, and described living in fear because of the possibility of online threats materialising in the 'real world'. The constant threat of anti-Muslim hate had forced participants to adopt a siege mentality and keep a low profile in order to reduce the potential for future attacks. Many participants reported taking steps to

become less 'visible' for example by taking the headscarf off for women and shaving their beards for men.

Lastly we asked participants what they felt should be done to prevent anti-Muslim hate, both online and offline. They made a number of recommendations including encouraging fellow Muslims and wider Muslim communities to be confident in recognising, reporting and challenging such incidents; better media training in order to report stories about Muslims and Islam fairly without stereotyping them as 'terrorists', 'extremists' and 'radicals'; the police taking steps to increase the confidence of victims; witnesses intervening (where possible and safe) to protect, assist victims of anti-Muslim hate and inform the police; more information in the form of workshops, advertisements, posters, flyers, reports promoted in mosques, community centres, businesses, shops, cafes and schools; social media companies making their systems of reporting hate crime more user friendly; diversity in the criminal justice system; challenging anti-Muslim rhetoric and engaging schools in the debate.