



Working Definition of Anti-Muslim Prejudice

“Anti-Muslim prejudice or hatred is a certain perception of Muslims, which may be expressed as hatred or outward hostility towards Muslims. Hatred may take the form of anti-Muslim rhetoric and physical manifestations that are targeted towards Muslims (or non-Muslim individuals who are considered to be sympathetic to Muslims) and/or their property, their career progression and towards religious or social institutions within Muslim communities.”

It should be noted that anti-Muslim prejudice can be directed towards an individual, but also towards ‘Muslims’ or ‘Muslim communities,’ as a whole. It can also take place in both on-line (virtual) and off-line (i.e. street based) environments. For example, in the on-line social media world anti-Muslim prejudice may be targeted at victims to provoke, cause hostility and promote intolerance by means of harassment (stalking), abuse, incitement, threatening behaviour, bullying and intimidation of the targeted person or persons (whether they be Muslim or non-Muslim).

Other manifestations of anti-Muslim prejudice or hatred could take the form of insults or attacks against *Islam*, as a means of caricaturing, stereotyping, ‘pigeon-holing’, dehumanizing and promoting hate towards Muslims. These manifestations may also portray Muslims as being a homogenous community, unlike faith communities which have, for example, conservative and liberal religious interpretations and lifestyles.

However, each case is specific and the context of the individual or organisation making such comments should be taken into account when making such a judgement. Context and past comments – whether overt and street based or on-line, are factors that can help to assist in making the judgement. Other expressions may take the form of visual graphics, actions, stereotypical statements and alleged character traits that are based on negative perceptions of Muslims and sometimes of Islam itself.

Contemporary examples of anti-Muslim prejudice in public life, schools, universities, the media, religious spheres and through social media could include, though are not limited to:

- Associating Muslims **collectively** to terrorism, extremism, terrorist attacks and murder.
- Promoting rhetoric that states that social, political, economic and spiritual rights for Muslims should be less than members of other faith communities. This also includes stating that Muslims should be *collectively punished* by a reduction of their civil rights and liberties, as though they bear the burden due to the actions of a handful of individuals from Muslim communities.
- Associating Muslims to terms that portray them as being *dangerous, untruthful, deceitful, devious* and *untrustworthy*, through to the association with organisms that cause death, decay and disease.

- Linking Muslims with the *take-over* of the United Kingdom or a *global take-over* and to the '*infiltration*' of institutions with a view to meeting these 'hidden' objectives.
- Suggesting that Muslims are *incapable* of independent thought, that they are all driven *primarily to spread Islam* and that they are incapable of living with other faith communities.
- Portraying Muslim women primarily through pictures, graphics and photographs that show them as being *oppressed, subjugated or dominated* by men. Other caricatures might include pictures primarily framing Muslim women through *wearing the burqa* (the one piece black clothing which covers the head and body) or the *niqab*, (the face veil).

These hidden objectives, the narrative goes, are associated with implementing Shariah Law in the UK in the future. (In fact, such statements are reflective of the kinds of anti-Semitism perpetuated for centuries against European Jewish communities – that they 'control' the media and the banking systems and are seeking to undermine Christendom.)

So in spreading anti-Muslim prejudice or hatred some people may be involved in:

- Accusing Muslims *collectively* for being responsible for real or imagined wrongdoing committed by a single Muslim person or group, or even for acts committed by non-Muslims who may-be reacting to perceived wrong-doing by a handful of Muslims.
- Making *dehumanizing* and *demonizing* statements that are mendacious in nature and which promote myths that Muslims want to Islamicize the United Kingdom, Europe or the 'West' or that they are *collectively* responsible for, involved in or vulnerable to grooming, just because of their faith background.
- *Denying* the scope and the intentionality towards genocide which led to the targeted killings of Muslims in places like Bosnia and which took place at the hands of Serb paramilitary forces in the former Yugoslavia.
- Making accusations which question the loyalty of Muslims in the United Kingdom and which suggest that their loyalty belongs to other nations, rather than the UK.

This working definition of anti-Muslim prejudice is just that, a working definition. It is therefore liable to change over time as TELL MAMA embeds its programme of work across the English regions and into Wales. However, by providing a working definition and some clear examples of anti-Muslim prejudice, we wanted to inform and assure communities that we are not interested in individuals or groups parodying religion, nor are we, in any shape or form, attempting to curtail the freedom of speech that is part and parcel of our values in the UK. It is important to note that hate speech cannot and should not be excused by describing it within the context of free speech when there are existing statutory laws that provide protection against hate statements and incitement.