

Independent expert appointed to tackle Islamophobia

- Independent adviser appointed to lead work to propose a definition of Islamophobia
- Government to consider advisers' recommendations on an effective definition
- Appointment underlines the government's commitment to stamping out all forms of religious and racial hatred

An independent adviser has today (23 July 2019) been appointed to provide expert advice on a definition of Islamophobia to the government.

Imam Qari Asim MBE, Deputy Chair of the Anti-Muslim Hatred Working Group will lead a process for establishing a definition of Islamophobia. He will be joined by a second adviser to be confirmed in due course.

This new work will build on the definitions of Islamophobia currently being considered, including the APPG definition. It will also draw on a wide range of opinions and work in close collaboration with the cross-government Anti-Muslim Hatred Working Group, to ensure that it commands broad support within Muslim communities and wider society.

Communities Secretary, Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP said:

The government is wholeheartedly committed to ensuring that Muslims are not targeted for hatred, persecution or discrimination.

Imam Asim's appointment marks a further step in helping us to achieve that goal and ensures that we develop an effective definition of Islamophobia which commands widespread support.

Imam Qari Asim MBE said:

To tackle the alarming rise in anti-Muslim sentiment, it is imperative that Islamophobia is defined.

I am deeply committed to working across Muslim communities and with relevant stakeholders to formulate a legally robust, comprehensive and workable definition of Islamophobia.

I am honoured to be entrusted with this role, which will have a far reaching impact in protecting British Muslims and tackling anti-Muslim hatred.

The government agrees there needs to be a formal definition of Islamophobia

to help strengthen our efforts against anti-Muslim hatred. But there are questions around the APPG definition, as concerns have been raised that the APPG definition could unintentionally undermine freedom of speech, and prevent legitimate criticism of Islamist extremism, or of unacceptable cultural practices. This is a matter that needs careful consideration.

The Communities Secretary announced earlier this year that we would instead be appointing two advisers to drive the process of establishing a definition on Islamophobia forward and lead work on making recommendations for the government to consider. The advisers will work with the Anti-Muslim Hatred Working Group which will continue to engage with Muslims and address hate and discrimination.

Imam Qari Asim MBE was appointed for his experience working with a broad range of communities to tackle Islamophobia, including in his role as the Deputy Chair of the cross-government Working Group to Tackle Anti-Muslim Hatred.

Imam Qari Asim biography

-Qari Asim, MBE, is senior Imam at Makkah Mosque in Leeds, which has won the award of being UK's model mosque and Legal Director at a global law firm.

He is Deputy Chair of government's Anti-Muslim Hatred Working Group and was an advisor to the Independent Review into the Application of Sharia Law in England and Wales.

Alongside this, he is Chair of Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board, and Senior Editor of ImamsOnline. Qari Asim is passionate about fostering relations between communities and is a trustee of Christian Muslim Forum, an executive board member of National Council of Imams & Rabbis, a director of Forum for Promoting Peace (London) and one of the faith advisors to the Near Neighbours programme.

Further information

The definition will not be legally binding and the appointment of a legal expert will be to ensure that the definition does not conflict with current equalities legislation.

The government has done more in recent years to tackle anti-Muslim hatred. This includes:

- Funding of Tell Mama, a dedicated third-party reporting organisation that offers victim support. Between 2016 and 2020 we will have provided the organisation with £2.5 million to raise awareness on anti-Muslim hatred and to increase reporting of hate crimes.
- Supporting and refreshing the cross-government working group on anti-Muslim hatred, which includes a broad range of representation of eminent community representatives, academics, and hate crime practitioners to advise and challenge the government on tackling Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hate crime.

- Ensuring for the first time, that police forces, are required to disaggregate religious hate crime data to allow us to better identify Islamophobia.
- Doubling the Places of Worship Fund to £1.6 million – to physically protect mosques and other places of worship and reassure our communities – and making it easier for people to apply for this funding from July 2019.
- A new £5 million fund to provide security training and a consultation on what more can be done to protect faith communities.