

Speech: Tell MAMA annual report launch

Thank you, Iman, it's a real pleasure to be here for the launch of your [important report](#).

And to pay tribute to Tell MAMA's vital work – in combatting the scourge of Islamophobia and helping build a strong society – a society that thrives on its diversity.

A diversity that is all the richer for the immense contribution of our Muslim community.

A community from one of the great faiths, of people who:

- run our businesses
- keep our public services going
- are the pillars of their communities
- enrich our cultural life – and, yes,
- make us proud when they represent our country, in places like here in Parliament, or out on the sports field

Extraordinary, inspiring individuals like Mohammed Mahmoud, the Imam whose vital intervention prevented further tragedy after the Finsbury Park attack.

Last month, as we marked one year since that terrible attack, I had the privilege of meeting him.

I thanked him for his courage, presence of mind and commitment to society – a society in which people from all backgrounds can come together.

And we should not forget how British Muslims, along with so many others, have stepped up so magnificently in times of crisis – after the terrorist attacks in Manchester and London and the terrible tragedy at Grenfell Tower.

It's essential we do more to celebrate these tremendous achievements, especially given the challenge we face when it comes to Islamophobia.

In recent months, we've seen some abhorrent incidents of Islamophobia – such as the Punish a Muslim Day letters.

This is utterly unacceptable and it will not be tolerated.

Someone has been charged in relation to it and it will go to trial later this year.

Because the message is clear: if you target any communities in our society in this way, you will be made to answer for it.

But I know we need to do more.

Once again, Tell MAMA have reported their highest number of anti-Muslim

incidents in 2017.

Your report shows, abusive behaviour and physical attacks remain the 2 most common forms of Islamophobic incident reported.

Your report also highlights the majority of anti-Muslim hatred is directed at Muslim women and that their visibility can be a factor in this – over 50% of reported incidents featured a visibly Muslim woman as the victim.

We need to do more to ensure that British Muslims feel safe to go about their lives as much as anyone else.

It also shows a growing concern online, with a 16.3% rise in reports in Islamophobia online.

I know Tell MAMA works incredibly hard with social media companies to combat anti-Muslim hatred that appears on their platforms, and your “Trusted Flagger” status is a valuable tool helping companies streamline reporting and content removal.

For our part, this government recently responded to the [Internet Safety Strategy green paper](#). It considers hateful harmful behaviour online and will feed into our hate crime action plan.

Whether it happens on our streets or online, we simply cannot tolerate Muslims being harassed, threatened, abused or facing violence and the fear and division this spreads in our society.

This government has been clear that no-one should be a target for hatred because of who they are – be that their religion, race, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability.

And with that in mind, our first priority is to support victims of Islamophobia, protect communities and encourage anyone who has suffered such appalling abuse to speak out and report what they’ve experienced.

Islamophobia has no place in our society. It does not reflect our British values of freedom of religion and freedom of expression.

It is unacceptable and it will not be tolerated.

We are committed to stamping out all forms of hatred.

It’s why we’re refreshing our [hate crime action plan](#) later this year; to reinforce our strong, preventative approach.

As well as supporting victims and communities and encouraging reporting, the plan also focuses on developing a better understanding of hate crime.

It encourages us to take stock of the progress made – and what more we need to do.

Work to tackle Islamophobia will continue to be a key element in this plan.

The [recent government-commissioned report](#) from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of the Constabulary and Fire Rescue Services, notes many examples of good practice, for example within the police.

With support from police leadership, we expect other forces to learn those important lessons.

In addition, last month the government announced [funding for specialist training for call-handlers](#), to help them support hate crime victims from the moment they report an incident.

We have also opened up the appointments process for Independent Members to sit on our [Anti-Muslim Hatred Working Group](#)...

...and I would encourage anyone with expertise in tackling hatred and an understanding of Muslim communities to put themselves forward.

I'm pleased to see that Tell MAMA will continue to be represented on the Working Group...

...and look forward to continuing to work with you to not only put an end to Islamophobia but to stand up to all kinds of prejudice and bigotry.

And it's this refusal to tolerate any form of hatred – to any community – that really makes Tell MAMA and your work stand out.

You've been at the forefront of the fight against anti-Muslim hatred, yes:

- by tapping into grassroots activism
- educating people about how to report and respond to hatred, and
- building trust with communities so they feel confident their complaints will be treated seriously and sensitively

But Tell MAMA has also shown incredible solidarity:

- with Jewish communities fighting anti-Semitism
- LGBT communities fighting homophobia, and
- transphobia and people with disabilities fighting hatred and discrimination

You know that Islamophobia cannot be beaten on its own.

That hatred can only be defeated when all of us stand together and work together.

I share this determination.

A determination for strong, thriving, well-integrated communities. Communities where people of all backgrounds can take advantage of the opportunities our country offers.

It's the thinking behind our new [Integrated Communities Strategy green paper](#).

Work is underway to trial a new localised approach to tackling integration

challenges in 5 areas.

And we will also be hosting a Communities Conference to inspire policymakers and showcase the incredible impact cohesive communities can have.

It therefore only remains for me to, once again, thank you for all your efforts in confronting Islamophobia...

...and ensure our proud and peaceful Muslim community feel safe and can live free and full lives as part of an open and inclusive society.

Thank you.