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Problems with the APPG Definition of 'Islamophobia'

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Summary:

'Cultural racism'

Tellingly, there is no attempt to define 'Islam' in the APPG report. What they have done instead is racialise Islam so as to make Islamophobia a form of racism. It does not matter that Islam is not a race, or that many Muslims do not see themselves as anything like a separate race. The authors want Islamophobia to be seen as racist. The report explains:

"The concept of racialisation thus situates Islamophobia within anti-racism discourse which is not however just informed by biological race, but by a culture – broadly defined – that is perceived to be inferior to and by the dominant one." (p39)

The idea is to define 'Islamophobia' as 'cultural racism', making it unacceptable to criticise Islamic culture or practices. By this definition, viewing a culture that gives less rights to women as inferior to one where women have more rights would be Islamophobic. Expressing that it is better for women not to have to cover their faces would also be Islamophobic. Arguing that polygamy should be outlawed because it is bad for society would also be Islamophobic. One would not even be able to say that UK law is preferable to sharia law. Once we agree to the concept of 'cultural racism' and Islamophobia defined in this way, we lose the freedom to criticise Islamic culture.

Who is an Islamophobe?

The list of those who have been accused of being Islamophobic is long and illustrious. For example, there's **Theresa May** [6]; **Tony Blair** [7]; Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education,**Amanda Spielman** [8]; **Sarah Champion** [9], MP for Rotherham, who spoke out about Islamic grooming gangs; **Maajid Nawaz** [10], founder of Quillium; and **Sadiq Kahn** [11], Mayor of London. An accusation of Islamophobia seems to be made against anyone who raises questions about Islamic beliefs or practices. There is no attempt in the APPG report to determine when accusations of Islamophobia would be inappropriate.

The problem with Islamophobia

The **Casey Review** [12] highlighted the problem with Islamophobia:

"Too many public institutions, national and local, state and non-state, have gone so far to accommodate diversity and freedom of expression that they have ignored or even condoned regressive, divisive and harmful cultural and religious practices, for fear of being branded racist or Islamophobic. …"

"At its most serious, it might mean public sector leaders ignoring harm or denying abuse."

This is the real problem – fear of being branded Islamophobic. Perhaps we should call this Islamophobiaphobia? At its worst is has meant that public sector institutions have been reluctant to tackle Islamic rape gangs because of Islamophobiaphobia, leaving more girls to be abused.

See also: Network of Sikh Organisations - Response to Islamophobia Inquiry [13]

Defining Islamophobia - A Policy Exchange Research Note [14]

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[7] http://oneworld.org/2015/03/04/islamic-group-names-theresa-may-as-islamophobe-of-the-year/
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[9] https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/08/17/sarah-champion-used-scapegoat-warning-cultural-link-child-sex/
[10] https://5pillarsuk.com/2015/03/08/home-secretary-theresa-may-voted-islamophobe-of-the-year/
[11] https://www.ihrc.org.uk/activities/event-reports/19489-event-report-islamophobia-awards-2018/
[12]
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/575973/The_Casey_Review_Report.pdf
[13] http://nsouk.co.uk/response-to-home-affairs-committee-islamophobia-inquiry/

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