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UK government adopts first-ever definition of anti-Muslim hatred



Britain has taken a step in tackling religiously motivated hatred, with government unveiling its first definition of anti-Muslim hostility

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LONDON (MNTV) – Britain has taken a landmark step in tackling religiously motivated hatred, with the government unveiling its first formal definition of anti-Muslim hostility after a lengthy and at times contentious consultation process.

Communities Secretary Steve Reed announced the measure in the House of Commons, citing record levels of hate crime against Muslims.

“Almost half of these crimes are targeted towards the Muslim community with many living in fear that they will be targeted because of how they



look," he told MPs. "This government has a duty to act but cannot tackle something that has not been defined."

The new non-statutory definition covers three broad areas: criminal acts — including violence, harassment, vandalism and intimidation — directed at Muslims or those perceived to be Muslim; the prejudicial stereotyping of Muslims as a collective group defined by fixed negative characteristics; and unlawful institutional discrimination intended to disadvantage Muslims in public and economic life.

Reed was keen to stress that the definition posed no threat to free expression. Government guidance confirmed that criticism of Islam, including content some Muslims may find offensive or disrespectful, remains protected speech.

The government said the definition drew on the model established by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's widely adopted antisemitism definition.

Reed also confirmed plans to appoint a dedicated anti-Muslim hate tsar, mirroring the antisemitism role already in existence.

Reactions pour in

Not everyone, however, was satisfied.

The Muslim Council of Britain — the U.K.'s largest Muslim umbrella body — declined to endorse the definition, saying it had been largely excluded from the consultation process.

Secretary-General Wajid Akhter described it as "a diminished version" of what the government's own independent working group had recommended, and raised concerns about a lack of transparency and meaningful community engagement.



Others within the working group offered a more positive assessment, as reported by Middle East Eye.

Javed Khan, managing director of the think tank Equi, highlighted that the definition's protection extended to those merely perceived to be Muslim — an acknowledgement, he said, that hatred frequently targets people on the basis of appearance or assumed ethnicity rather than confirmed religious identity.

Shaista Gohir of the Muslim Women's Network U.K. also welcomed the announcement, saying it struck the right balance between protecting individuals and preserving free speech.

The backdrop to Monday's announcement is stark. Equi's research found a 43% rise in anti-Muslim incidents between 2023 and 2024, and estimated that the 2024 summer riots alone cost the country at least £243 million.

Yet the same research found that a majority of the British public holds favourable or neutral views of Muslims — attitudes that become more positive still when people are shown concrete examples of Muslim contributions to British life.

The definition forms part of a broader government action plan, Protecting What Matters, which also includes an annual state of extremism report and measures to prevent hate preachers from entering the country.

For many in Britain's Muslim community, it represents a long-overdue step — one taken years after comparable protections were extended to other faith groups.

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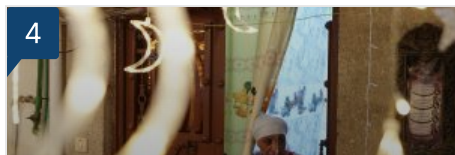
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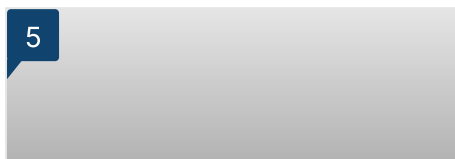
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