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The question is not whether Islamic no-go zones exist, but how many areas currently operate under the same unspoken conditions?

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The phrase "Islamic no-go zone" has been treated as taboo in British politics for more than twenty years, routinely dismissed as paranoia, propaganda, or imported American hysteria. Yet recent events have given us an example that is indisputable.

Sociologists and criminologists have long used the term no-go zone to describe areas where the state's authority is formally present but practically subordinate to local social control. The term does not imply that outsiders are physically barred, but that entering the area means operating under a different set of norms, backed by the possibility of informal sanction. These sanctions range from verbal warnings and social hostility to the threat or use of force.

One of the earliest recognisable discussions on Islamic no-go zones followed the Oldham riots in 2001, where native English residents clashed violently with Pakistani and Bangladeshi immigrants. A major grievance among locals at the time was the belief that parts of the town had effectively been surrendered, that the cultural character of certain neighbourhoods had become exclusionary, and that the native population was no longer welcome. The sense of dispossession was reinforced by police data showing that the majority of racially motivated attacks in Oldham were being carried out against white victims.



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During the unrest, one proposal was to create formal “buffer zones” separating the communities. The Home Secretary at the time, David Blunkett, ultimately rejected the idea. It would have been an acknowledgement by the government that territorial boundaries had already formed. No such official zones were ever implemented, and the idea of “no-go areas” remained outside of the realm of law or policy. Instead, Blunkett attributed the disorder to the influence of agitating far-right groups.

In the years that followed, claims of no-go areas appeared regularly. Sparkbrook, Small Heath, parts of Luton, and Dewsbury were named as places where outsiders could expect to be challenged, and where local Islamic religious norms shaped behaviour in public spaces. These claims were difficult to verify in formal terms. They relied on atmosphere, interaction, and the reactions of residents. Such subjective nature of these experiences, however real, made them easy to dismiss.

A notable example came in 2015 when a Fox News guest wrongly stated that Birmingham was entirely Muslim and off limits to non-Muslims. There is, of course, a sizable contingent of Indian Hindus, Sikhs, Sub-Saharan African Christians, as well as a small and ever shrinking English minority. The claim was widely mocked as absurd and quickly withdrawn with an apology. It became the standard reference point used to undermine any future mention of no-go zones.

Even when evidence surfaced that suggested informal authority was being exercised, such as the Sharia patrols in Tower Hamlets who filmed themselves telling strangers to leave or to stop drinking, police shut the group down quickly. The narrative remained that these incidents were fringe, unrepresentative, and did not reflect wider shifts in the control of public space.

For two decades, then, the idea of Islamic no-go zones remained suspended between personal testimony and official denial. However, that changed with the ban on the UKIP demonstration in Whitechapel, a district of East London.

On the 25th of October, the political party UKIP planned a lawful political demonstration, focused on opposition to Islamism. Whatever one thinks of the party itself, the legal situation was straightforward: political demonstrations are permitted, and the state has an obligation to protect them. Before the event took place, however, the Metropolitan Police issued an order banning the protest from the area.



Commander Nick John said there was a "realistic prospect of serious disorder" and that the location, Whitechapel, was particularly "sensitive". The implication was clear: if the protest went ahead, significant violence could follow, and the police were either unable, or more likely, unwilling to prevent it.

This is a notable break with established practice. Historically, when two groups are expected to clash, the police presence is increased to protect the right to assemble. In this instance, for the first time, that right was withdrawn. The threat of disorder determined the outcome. Those willing to use or imply violence were, in effect, granted veto power. This is the definition of a no-go zone – the police all but said so themselves.

UKIP's leader, Nick Tenconi said of the incident:

"As a result of Islamist intimidation tactics and threats of violence from the unholy alliance of communists and Islamo-fascists, the Met police caved in to the mob and banned us from marching on Saturday."

"The Met police have declared it a no-go zone for patriots and Christians in response. This is absolutely dire – what we are seeing unfold in Britain is Islamist sectarianism and the threat of violence so great from the Islamic caliphate in Britain that the police have only one hand left to play which is to enforce segregation. This strategy is destined to bring about conflict and unrest."

Even after the protest was relocated, groups of local Muslim men gathered in Whitechapel. Footage, widely circulated on social media, shows many masked, coordinated groups wearing black. In another widely circulated video, a member of the Stand Up To Racism protest attempted to assure a group of Muslim men, who kept themselves separate, that they were "on the same side", to which one Muslim man said: "No, we are not." The Stand Up To Racism activists had come out in support of the local Muslim groups, yet they were not welcomed. The exchange made clear that these groups have their own communal priorities and do not view ideological progressives as allies.

The Metropolitan Police might not have stated explicitly that Whitechapel is an Islamic no-go zone. They did not need to. The decision itself established the fact. A public space in Britain has been treated differently because of the anticipated reaction of one specific demographic group. From this point on, the question is not whether Islamic no-go zones exist but how many such areas currently operate under the same unspoken conditions?



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