

# Cross-Party Group on Challenging Racial and Religious Prejudice

## AGM

Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> November 2024 at 6pm (online)

### Meeting Minutes

#### Present

Foyso! Choudhury                      MSP (Chair)  
Fulton MacGregor                      MSP

#### Non-MSP Group Members

Dr Muhammad Adrees	Muslim Council of Scotland
Leen Ali	University of Stirling Students' Union
Shasta Ali	Corra Foundation
Sukhi Singh Bains	HREDI / Heriot-Watt University
Yahya Barry	The Film and Television Charity
Ephraim Borowski	Scottish Council of Jewish Communities
Daniel Gilius	MEND
Valerie Gray	Police Scotland
Faten Hameed	Scottish Iraqi Association
Arfan Hanif	CAPS Volunteer
Peter Hopkins	Newcastle University (Secretary)
Nurul Hoque Ali	Aberdeen City Council
Dr Asifa M Hussain	Heriot-Watt University
Sameer Hussain	Scottish Ahlul Bayt Society (SABS)
Zainab Hussain	The Alwaleed bin Talal Centre, University of Edinburgh
Dhruva Kumar	Gandhian Peace Society
Neil Lal	The Indian Council of Scotland and the United Kingdom
Nicola Livingston	SCOJEC
Nina Munday	Edinburgh College
Sara Medel Jimenez	University of Edinburgh
Eddie Nicholls	
Bushra Riaz	Kidney Research UK
Chris Ringland	Evangelical Alliance Scotland
Billy Singh	Show Racism the Red Card
Shaukat Sultan	BAME Scotland
Linsay Taylor	MEND
Dr Mateo Urquijo	

Kimberley Wong                      CRER

## **Apologies**

Naseem Anwar

Alex Cole-Hamilton                      MSP

Pam Gosal                                      MSP

Anas Sarwar                                      MSP

## **Welcome**

Foyso Choudhury MSP welcomed everyone to the meeting.

## **Election of office bearers**

Fulton MacGregor MSP thanked all members of the group for their contributions of the past year and for seeking to address issues of racial and religious prejudice.

Foyso Choudhury MSP was nominated and seconded to remain as the Chair of the Cross Party Group on Challenging Racial and Religious Prejudice.

Pam Gosal MSP, Fulton MacGregor MSP, and Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP were all nominated and seconded to serve as Deputy Convenors of the Cross Party Group on Challenging Racial and Religious Prejudice and Anas Sarwar MSP was nominated and seconded to serve as a member of the Cross Party Group on Challenging Racial and Religious Prejudice

The issue of the secretariat will be confirmed at the next meeting where the Secretary of the group will be appointed.

## **Previous minutes**

The previous minutes were approved.

## **Discussion about riots and racial/religious prejudice**

Those attending shared their views about racial and religious prejudice in the context of the riots that took place a few months ago. Key points made include:

- Mixed reviews about safety concerns – some managers responded very well but others felt let down by the media and how things were portrayed.
- Concerns around misinformation, especially the idea that everything is safe in Scotland.
- International students advised not to travel to the UK, so this had a direct impact on student recruitment for universities. Impact on the ways in which the UK was perceived as a safe place to study. Most universities have systems for reporting incidents and sense is that some students do not feel confident reporting to the police.
- High levels of vulnerability felt during the riots and some liaised with the police to try to build stronger links and to encourage reporting.
- Islamophobia awareness month –seeds of change is the focus of the campaign and the need to focus on small changes we can make to challenge Islamophobia and the small actions we can take to address this.

- Concerns about rising Islamophobia and the lack of action taken on the issues and the need to address these issues going forward.
- What actions are being taken to address the risk of the rise of the far right and the possible threat of this in Scotland.
- Lack of acceptance of a definition of Islamophobia and the concerns expressed around this. Concerns about rising Islamophobia given the ongoing genocide in Palestine including the death of many women and children. It was noted that there was a need for a permanent ceasefire and that foreign policy should be changed.
- It is up to individual groups and organisations to publish their own work or share their own research or outputs. Notice of events can be shared with the CPG membership via the group secretary.
- Daily concerns of fear and worry unite the diverse members of the group and the lack of action on specific issues.
- Misinformation and disinformation, and societal polarisation are key issues to keep an eye on and the CPG should remain vigilant to these issues.
- We should encourage reporting of hate crimes and incidents to the police as crime statistics are a powerful tool to trigger appropriate support for communities and influence change.
- It was noted that a crime motivated by religion or perceived religion (along with race, disability, sexuality etc) is recorded as a hate crime and not only those motivated by race.
- Intersectional data on race/ethnicity with religion/belief would be valuable across themes (curriculum, hate crime, public sector recruitment etc).
- Scotland should lead the way and not wait for England.

## Plan for year ahead

- It was proposed that we hold an event in the Parliament that includes different racial and religious groups and focuses on diverse forms of discrimination.
- Is working together helpful or should we try to divide and conquer? Or are there shared themes in which we should work on together such as education, the media, or other specific issues. Best to pick a direction and focus on this
- Is there a need for a terms of reference for the group?
- Working groups focused on specific issues would be useful such as those working in the context of higher and further education.