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RELATIONS WITH THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY

Cabinet recently discussed relations between the Muslim and other communities here in the UK. In a discussion on terrorism, Ministers focussed on the need to encourage moderate Muslim opinion to the detriment of extremism both at home and overseas, and the extent to which a sense of isolation and disaffection within parts of the Muslim community is leading to acts of terrorism. The same subject came up at one of our Wednesday morning meetings. I would like to invite you and other recipients of this letter to a further discussion, using this letter as an agenda. Relevant analysis and suggested answers to some of the questions posed below would be welcome in advance.

1. The problem

There is a feeling that parts of the Muslim community, particularly younger men, are disaffected. This includes some that are well educated with good economic prospects. Al Qaida and its off-shoots provide a dramatic pole of attraction for the most disaffected.

The first pillar of the government's counter terrorism strategy, CONTEST, is prevention. The aim is to prevent terrorism by tackling its underlying causes, to work together to resolve regional conflicts to support moderate Islam and reform, and to diminish support for terrorists by influencing relevant social and economic issues. Clearly this is a wide agenda, and reflects the need expressed in Cabinet for all departments to contribute towards the CONTEST objective.

- What do we mean by disaffection, what is the evidence and how widespread is it?
- Are the issues primarily social or cultural or economic or a mixture?
- Is the issue primarily disaffection with other communities, particularly the majority community, or is it also disaffection with the conventional leadership and established traditions of the Muslim community?



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- How far is the phenomenon just the natural tendency of second or third generation migrants to revisit their roots?
- How far are the drivers domestic and how far international?
- How far do they affect only parts of the Muslim community and how far do they impact on other communities too?
- Is the primary concern the risk of involvement by a few people in terrorist activity, the risk of inter-community conflict or any wider concerns?

2. Possible responses

Without being clear about the nature of the problem one can only tentatively identify possible responses in general terms.

- i. Research – is more needed to be clearer about the nature of the problem and the potential effectiveness of responses? Are we tapping into all external research? Have the lessons of previous problems been learnt?
- ii. Communication – are we listening enough to the Muslim communities (here and overseas) and understanding what we hear (even where we do not agree with it). Are we communicating the right messages to the right parts of the Muslim community effectively? If not how can we do better? Equally are we communicating the right messages – positive and negative (in relation to a small minority) - about the Muslim community to others?
- iii. Economic opportunity – are programmes to ensure economic opportunity for all parts of the Muslim community adequate? If they were given higher priority how would that be achieved without a negative reaction from 'losers'? Should programmes be targeted specifically at the Muslim community or be 'ethnically blind'? Are there lessons to be learnt from the response to alienation of the afro-caribbean community in the 1980s?
- iv. Social and cultural issues – is the only response better communication? Is the full range of Government policy and provision of public services sufficiently sensitive to the social and cultural position?
- v. Migration controls – are these helping as much as they should?
- vi. Criminal Justice (and anti-social behaviour) – the balance between effectiveness and alienation?
- vii. What is the impact of single faith schools?
- viii. Foreign policy – should our stance (eg on MEPP or Kashmir) be influenced more by these concerns? How do we communicate our foreign policy to the Muslim community? Where are they getting their information and opinions from?



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- ix. Confronting intolerance – how best to confront intolerance towards the Muslim community, and intolerance of others by some of the Muslim community (most dramatically in the form of support for and even involvement in terrorism). Would it help to look again at legislation against religious discrimination?

3. Partners and agents

- i. Depending on the appropriate mix of responses, the Government will evidently need to work with a range of partners and agents. Leadership is likely to need to be local as well as national;
- ii. Some agencies and parts of government might be better able to establish a rapport with the disaffected groups than others – a perception that this is only driven by a counter terrorist (or law and order) agenda might be detrimental;
- iii. The education service is the only agency in touch with all young Muslims, at least up to age 16 and often beyond (bearing in mind some of the most extremely disaffected are well educated);
- iv. Local authorities are involved in local communities;
- v. In the DAs, the devolved equivalents would need to be involved;
- vi. Other public services; police, health, jobcentres, Connexions etc all come into contact with some people in the community. The police also monitor community tension;
- vii. Appropriate community groups and the voluntary sector will undoubtedly have a role;
- viii. So might leaders of other faith groups.

Community and faith leaders in the Muslim community will have a role to play, and must perhaps be seen to be involved, although will be effective only to the extent they are really in touch with and can influence disaffected sections of the community. Home-Office already has programmes of capacity building in these community organisations – are these targeted at the right bodies? Are the people we are talking to representative of (and in any way accountable to) their communities?

4. Departments

The points listed above suggest that CO, ODPM, DfES, HO, DTI, DWP, FCO and HMT all have a substantial interest in this subject.

Perhaps we could discuss Whitehall machinery for delivering a strategic response to the issues of concern to Ministers when we meet.



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I would also like to take that opportunity to discuss who from outside Whitehall could be involved in next steps.

My office will be in touch to arrange a time to meet after Easter.

I am copying this letter to Mavis McDonald, David Normington, Robin Young, Richard Mottram, Michael Jay, David Omand, Howell James, Nick McPherson, Helen Edwards, Joe Montgomery, Michael Richardson and Nigel Sheinwald.

I understand the FCO and Home Office are preparing a paper on Muslim Youth and Extremism. It would be very helpful if you could circulate this when it is ready.

Your sincerely
Andrew

Andrew Turnbull




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10 May 2004

Dear Andrew

RELATIONS WITH THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY

Thank you for your letter of 6 April. As background for your inter-departmental meeting, I attach a draft paper prepared jointly by the FCO and Home Office on Young Muslims and Extremism. It draws on a range of sources including intelligence and last year's audit paper on British Muslims by the Strategy Unit. I also enclose a Home Office briefing paper which summarises information from the 2001 Census, the Home Office Citizenship Survey 2001 and independent polls over the last two years.

2. Extremism can be a symptom of disaffection, the riots in some northern towns three years ago were another. We need policies to handle the symptoms and limit their impact but the broader task is to address the roots of the problem which include the discrimination, disadvantage and exclusion suffered by many Muslim communities (as by other minorities).

3. The links between social deprivation among British Muslims and extremism is not simple cause and effect. Case histories suggest that the British Muslims who are most at risk of being drawn into extremism and terrorism fall into two groups: a) well educated, with degrees or technical/professional qualifications, typically targeted by extremist recruiters and organisations

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circulating on campuses; b) under-achievers with few or no qualifications, and often a non-terrorist criminal background – sometimes drawn to Mosques where they may be targeted by extremist preachers and in other cases radicalised or converted whilst in prison. Moreover many of the UK's links to international terrorism are from expatriate communities and exiles from abroad, especially North Africa, who are motivated by an international agenda. However we will certainly not be effective in tackling the dangers of extremism without gaining the active cooperation of Muslims, immigrant and British, and that gives us added reason for addressing their problems of social exclusion.

4. The Home Office's work programme is based on a four fold strategy of, first, *intensified dialogue with Muslim communities*; second, *action to help Muslim communities themselves address the main risks of radicalisation*; third, *research and surveys better to understand the perceptions of our Muslim communities and changes in them* and finally *ensuring that Government is effectively tackling disadvantage and discrimination faced by Muslim communities*. The programme includes the following.

Dialogue

(a) We are discussing with Muslim representatives their community's concerns about the operation of the anti-terrorist powers. Substantial progress has been made in building a closer relationship with the Muslim Council of Britain. The MCB letter of 31 March to Imams and Mosques urging them to be clearer about the incompatibility of terrorism with Islam and about the need for Muslims to co-operate with the police represented a significant step forward.

(b) The ACPO-chaired Muslim Safety Forum has become an increasingly important channel for Muslim/police relations and will be developed as necessary.

(c) We plan a more intensive programme of engagement with young Muslims around domestic policy issues.

(d) Fiona Mactaggart is working to enlist MPs with large Muslim constituencies as partners in Government's dialogue and engagement with Muslim communities.

(e) We are preparing for circulation to departments guidance on Muslim sensitivities and appropriate non-inflammatory terminology.

(f) One common feature of cases where young Muslims have become involved in terrorist activity has been a genuine sense of bewilderment on the part of their parents. We think we should explore with Muslim representatives whether there are ways of engaging Muslim parents and helping them to be part of the solution.

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(g) The Government needs to persuade the Muslim community that it respects and trusts the community, and knows that those involved in terrorism constitute only a very small minority. At the same time, it needs to persuade Muslim leaders, both nationally and locally, to be more active in tackling extremism and making this clear to both Muslims and non-Muslims. This requires continuing engagement with Muslim leaders and organisations, involving MPs, engaging with the Muslim business community (since local business leaders are often influential in Mosque committees), and ensuring consistent messages from Government

Radicalisation

(h) In prisons, where action has previously been taken to recruit a moderate cadre of Imams chaplains, we are looking to see what further steps are needed.

(i) Some faith communities, especially Muslims, are dependent on poorly qualified ministers of religion from abroad with little English or knowledge of our society. We will introduce in June a requirement for ministers of religion from abroad to have adequate English; and launch consultation on additional requirements.

Research

(j) Our Community Cohesion team has set up a system for monitoring community tensions in key areas around the country. This draws on local authority, VCs and police sources including ACPO's new National Community Tensions Team. We are exploring with ACPO a possible supplementary survey of extremist activity in schools and campuses in selected areas.

(k) We have in hand a research programme to give us a better insight into the causes of radicalisation and recruitment. That in turn will enable us to devise a better focused strategy for disrupting and preventing radicalisation.

(l) Building on the research already in hand, we need, for the future, to build up our understanding of the nature and causes of disaffection and disadvantage. Muslim communities appear to have low levels of civic participation and volunteering, mixed attitudes towards integration and (fairly small) minorities who do not feel loyal or patriotic towards Britain, or think terrorist attacks against the US are justified. But this may reflect demographic rather than faith-specific factors. The position on disadvantage is similarly complex. Muslims are experiencing high levels of disadvantage in terms of employment (especially among women), qualifications and deprivation, but there is substantial variation between ethnic groups within the Muslim community.

Tackling Disadvantage

(m) The departments leading on social exclusion, unemployment and educational disadvantage need to audit their programmes to ensure that they are reaching and benefiting the Muslim community. Generally there is a good

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level of awareness in Government of the need to target intervention on young people in our Bangladeshi and Pakistani communities, which are among the most disadvantaged. But there is a long standing campaign by Muslims for programmes to recognise and address them as a distinct group and community, rather than relying on ethnic classifications. They are also pressing for the Race Relations Act to be extended to religion. I agree with you that we need to revisit that. We need to ensure that Government policies and public services are sensitive to Muslims needs. The recent "Working Together" Report, about the Government's relationship with faith communities, called for enhanced faith sensitivity in Government on policy development and service delivery. Departments and public authorities are becoming accustomed to addressing race equality in their work, but there is now a need for faith to be mainstreamed. The establishment of the Faith Communities Unit in the Home Office is intended to help in facilitating this.

5. It is also important to combat Islamophobia and persuade the public and the media that Muslims are not the enemy within. Government needs to look for opportunities to highlight Muslim success stories and examples of Muslim contributions to society at national and local level. We need to help and encourage Muslim organisations to represent their community effectively and in a positive light. The FCO/Home Office paper makes some suggestions on this. Other departments, including DCMS, have a role to play.

6. We think you have correctly identified the agencies and departments which need to be engaged in this work, except that DCMS may need to be included. I would also like to invite input from the Security Service who I believe have an important contribution to make. The lead in the Home Office is being taken by Helen Edwards, Director-General of our Communities Group, supported by Mark Carroll, Director for Race, Cohesion, Equality and Faith.

7. I am copying this letter to Mavis McDonald, David Normington, Robin Young, Richard Mottram, Michael Jay, David Omand, Howell James, Nick Macpherson, Helen Edwards, Joe Montgomery, Michael Richardson and Nigel Sheinwald. I am also copying it with your letter to Eliza Manningham-Buller.

V. - em
John
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SUMMARY

Young Muslims and Extremism

Issue

- Action plan to prevent young British Muslims from becoming disaffected, alienated and attracted to extremist movements and terrorist activity.

The problem

Many young British Muslims integrate and contribute positively to society. Britain scores higher than other European countries for acceptance of Muslims. But:

- Some feel they cannot be both British and Muslim; and polls suggest a small but significant minority are sympathetic to extremism and terrorist activity;
- Extremist groups in the UK actively recruit young Muslims;
- Small numbers of young British Muslims have engaged in terrorism, both at home and abroad.

There is no simple cause and effect and we must avoid generalising. We need to *understand better* the causes and extent of extremism, and the nature of links between extremism and terrorism. A strong Muslim identity and strict adherence to traditional Muslim teachings are not in themselves problematic or incompatible with Britishness. Factors which may attract some to extremism include:

- *Anger*: a perception of "double standards" in British foreign policy, where democracy is preached but oppression of the 'Ummah' (the one nation of believers) is practised or tolerated e.g. in Palestine, Iraq, Afghanistan, Kashmir, Chechnya; a consequent sense of helplessness over the situation of Muslims generally; the lack of any real opportunities to vent frustration. The following quote by a young British Muslim leader best demonstrates the link between extremism/terrorism amongst young British Muslims and foreign policy issues. "*What is needed is a debate about the root cause of terrorism, which is our country's foreign policy.*" As part of a truly globalised community, many young British Muslims carry the burden of struggles elsewhere - Palestine, Iraq and Kashmir." (Quote from Osama Saeed-Muslim Association of Britain, The Observer- 4th April 2004).
- *Alienation*: the struggle to reconcile a modern Islamic identity with modern secular challenges; a general lack of young Muslim participation in mainstream politics and public life; Islamophobia and ignorance about Islam in British society and the media creating alienation, including among educated professionals; a perception that counter-terrorism powers are targeted at Muslims.
- *Activism*: a proactive desire to forge an alternative Islamic identity to that of parents but often without an underpinning knowledge of Islam, disillusionment with 'sell-out' mainstream Muslim organisations; a desire for simple 'Islamic'

solutions; the search for practical goals and a purpose in life, the need to belong: all driving vulnerable youngsters in unpredictable directions.

A number of extremist groups are *actively recruiting* young British Muslims. Most do not advocate violence. But they can provide an environment for some to gravitate to violence. Extremists target poor and disadvantaged Muslims, including through mosque and prison contact. But they also target middle class students and affluent professionals through schools and college campuses. Others get recruited through personal contact, often by chance, and maintain a low profile for operational purposes.

The Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities, which make up nearly two thirds of Muslims in the UK, experience very high levels of economic and educational disadvantage. Overall, Muslims have unemployment three times above the wider population, poor qualifications (over two fifths have none) and high representation in deprived areas.

Points of Action:

There is work being conducted in this area of engagement by the FCO and Home Office (see attached paper- part II -Action).

But to have the required impact, further action will need to be fundamentally cross-governmental (and not just Home Office and FCO), and properly costed and resourced. This requires further consideration, but subject to that the following represent key actions, which will assist in tackling extremism among Muslim youth.

Improving our understanding of the extent and causes of extremism among young Muslims

1. Conduct focus groups with young Muslims, exploring their views on key aspects of foreign and domestic policy, interpretations of Islam, and the compatibility of being British and Muslim. Focus groups to be drawn from a range of educational, economic and ethnic backgrounds.
2. In light of focus groups, if needed, commission a more detailed and scientific study of Muslim opinions and experiences, to include older generations and some comparison with other faith groups to put the views of Muslims in context.
3. Commission from the police service a survey of disaffection and extremist activity in schools and colleges in key selected areas.
4. Role of the National Community Tensions Team in helping Government to remain informed about levels of disaffection and extremism.

Combating the recruitment of young British Muslims by terrorist organisations

1. Undertake research to extensively map the "Terrorist Career Path", including changes in opinions held, changes in associates or membership of organisations,

and specific actions taken by individuals on the path from law-abiding citizen to terrorist.

2. On the basis of this research, develop a comprehensive Interventions Strategy, to enable us to intervene at key trigger points to prevent young Muslims from becoming drawn into extremist and terrorist activity and action.
3. Our work in this area will be focussed on finding local community based interventions, with support for faith, voluntary and community organisations from GOs, local authorities and central government as appropriate.

Combating Islamophobia

1. Prepare and circulate to Departments advice on Muslim sensitivities and appropriate non-inflammatory terminology to be used in referring to Muslim issues.
2. Prepare communications plan aimed at combating distorted public and media perceptions of Islam and Muslims. Collaboration on this with moderate Muslim bodies, including student bodies, will further assist Government/Muslim relations.
3. Build capacity amongst information services like MCB Direct, in providing accurate representation for mainstream Islam (i.e. representatives and experts) in the mainstream media.
4. Encourage, assist and promote mainstream Muslim communication channels, i.e. radio stations, newspapers aimed at British Muslims, and television channels. Many of these are set up during a fixed time of the year (Ramadhan), and do not have the capacity to run a full-time set-up. This is what HMG has promoted in the Islamic world. That expertise can be utilised domestically.

Dialogue with young Muslims and building leadership capacity

1. Projection of British Muslim youth as role models for overseas audiences (e.g. sending delegations of British Muslim youth to 'represent' Britain, signalling UK's pride in its Muslim youth.), and encouraging young moderate Muslims to become spokespersons for foreign media e.g. digital television.
2. Expand and deepen dialogue with young Muslims on non-traditional foreign policy areas of concern to Muslims, e.g. development (follow-up to UNDP Arab Development Report), globalisation, human rights, etc.
3. European dimension. Enable British Muslim youth to discuss mainstream/European Islam with EU counterparts, as well as how to tackle extremism internally within the European Muslim community.
4. Encourage Muslim youth to take part in local and national youth parliaments (the Bradford Youth Parliament recently visited by Mr O'Brien being a successful model of Muslim teenagers taking part in wider political engagement).

5. Strengthen the hand of moderate student and youth organisations (such as the UMS and FOSIS), and of moderates within such organisations, by:

- continuing to offer Ministerial speakers for meetings and debates on foreign and domestic issues of concern to Muslims.
- inviting moderate Muslim youth representatives to participate in consultative discussions with departments on specific issues.

6. Audit government and other publicly funded community capacity building funding to assess the extent to which funds are reaching Muslim organisations and especially those for young Muslims. If necessary, advise Ministers on ways of channelling more funding to this need.

Reaching out to underachievers

1. Work with DfES, DWP and DWP to address Muslim disadvantage and reduce social exclusion
2. Ongoing work with the Prison Service to develop a programme of measures to ensure young British Muslims do not leave prisons alienated and radicalised, and holding extremist views.

Responding to Muslim concerns about the use of anti-terrorist powers

1. Identify key individuals preaching extremism and recruiting to the cause and take necessary enforcement action
2. Ensure arrests and searches under the new powers are evidence-based, intelligence-led and proportionate
3. Engage Muslim community in a dialogue over the use of the powers
4. Provide feedback to Muslim community on reasons for, and outcomes of, arrests and searches under the new powers

Responding to other Muslim concerns

Show that HMG is addressing Muslim concerns, including youth concerns, by:

1. highlighting consular assistance given to British Muslim students/youth in legal difficulty abroad including those accused of affiliation to extremist bodies (e.g. the HT students in Egypt) and in relation to the Hajj, to dispel the claim of double standards
2. reviewing the scope for meeting Muslim concerns identified during public seminars with mosque representatives earlier this year, and publicising any resulting changes in policy. (Issues include family law, animal slaughter and faith in education.)

3. raising awareness among young Muslims of the current and forthcoming legal protections against religiously aggravated offences and religious discrimination in employment
4. making pump priming funding available to the Muslim Safety Forum

Promoting mainstream Islam

1. Bring about the development and provision of subsidised training, upskilling and qualifications for home-grown Islamic faith leaders. Training to focus on pastoral, community leadership and management skills. Action in hand, by Learning and Skills Council and Home Office (with FCO involvement). Subsequent roll-out of LSC-subsidised courses.
2. Raise the standards required from ministers of religion including Imams seeking admission and extension of stay. Package to include immediate English language requirement. Religious qualification requirements and civic engagement tests to follow after consultation, in stages during 2004/5.
3. Assist mainstream organisations to promote the many UK-based courses on Arabic and theology, taking away the need for Muslim youth to travel to seminaries in the Islamic world, many of which preach extremist doctrines. Encourage mainstream organisations to put their material on the web.
4. Seek opportunities through Government engagement and recognition, to promote awareness of moderate scholars with followings amongst young Muslims, such as Imam Hamza Yusuf and Imam Suhaib Webb.
5. Strengthen moderate Muslim media organisations (radio stations and publications, such as MCB Direct, e.g. by giving them stories and interviews.

Remedying the exclusion of Muslims from public life

More work is needed on promoting Muslim representation in public life. Any feeling that Muslim voices are not heard in places of influence is helpful to extremism. The Home Office should consider what more could be done, and report conclusions.

YOUNG MUSLIMS AND EXTREMISM

FCO/HOME OFFICE PAPER

The remit

The Home Secretary and Foreign Secretary have commissioned a joint FCO/Home Office paper for the Prime Minister on how to prevent British Muslims especially young Muslims, from becoming attracted to extremist movements and terrorist activity.

Scope of Paper

This paper considers the combination of issues affecting some sections of young British Muslims, which may cause them to become disaffected, and in some cases turns them to extremism. It should be noted that concerns about terrorism are not the only angle from which the Home Office is addressing relations with and disaffection in the Muslim community; in particular, this paper does not encompass the Home Office's wider work on race equality and community cohesion, which also bear on those issues. In terms of the FCO's engagement with British Muslims and Islam it is also much wider than just terrorism, and ranges from policy engagement with British Muslims to engaging with the Muslim world on a raft of different issues.

By extremism, we mean advocating or supporting views such as support for terrorist attacks against British or western targets, including the 9/11 attacks, or for British Muslims fighting against British and allied forces abroad, arguing that it is not possible to be Muslim and British, calling on Muslims to reject engagement with British society and politics, and advocating the creation of an Islamic state in Britain.

The paper comments on whether there is a link between extremism and terrorism, and how we might seek to prevent young Muslims from becoming attracted to them. It does not address the prevention of terrorism, issues about intelligence-gathering or activity in the UK by non-British Muslims.

* The assessment draws on input from the Security Service, cases of British Muslims known or suspected to have become involved in extremist activity abroad or at home, insights from individuals who have become disillusioned with such movements, available surveys of Muslim opinion, discussion with Muslim representatives and advice from our departmental Muslim advisers. For the purposes of this paper we are focussing on those young Muslims who were either born in the UK or who significant ties to it rather than those who have acquired British nationality more recently. It takes account of the Strategy Unit's Strategic Audit paper on British Muslim Communities (July 2003).

PART 1 - EVALUATION

Grounds for Concern

Concerns that some Muslims including young Muslims are turning to extremism, are based on:

- A small number of young British Muslims are known to have committed or participated in terrorism abroad or to have joined violent or militant organisations in other countries, e.g. the British suicide bombers in Israel.
- A number of extremist groups operate in the UK and seek to recruit young Muslims, often on campuses and colleges. (See annex A for examples and what they advocate.)