Bad Faith Actor

Policy Exchange

A study of the Centre for Media Monitoring (CfMM)

Andrew Gilligan and Dr Damon Perry

Foreword by Andrew Neil

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Policy Exchange

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Published by
Policy Exchange, 1 Old Queen Street, Westminster, London SW1H 9JA

www.policyexchange.org.uk

ISBN: 978-1-917201-60-5

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Foreword

Andrew Neil, columnist, broadcaster and former editor of The Sunday Times

It is sometimes said that the British media habitually misrepresents and slanders Muslims. Much of the apparent evidence for this claim has been gathered by a body called the Centre for Media Monitoring (CfMM), which is (or was until this week) part of the Muslim Council of Britain. This report by Policy Exchange forensically demonstrates that CfMM, its evidence and its conclusions are badly flawed.

It shows how CfMM has a purpose far wider than the correction of supposed factual error. It seeks, in its own words, to take "control of the narrative" about Muslims, enforcing a tendentious view of Islam and, sometimes, seeking to suppress truthful, factual reporting which happens to contradict that view.

It shows how CfMM has been accepted, without much scrutiny, by some senior figures in the media and the press regulator, Ipso; how it has gained influence in their organisations; and how, as a result, it may be succeeding in some of its aims. It shows how CfMM is part of a wider campaign for legal restrictions on what you can say about Islam, with fundamental implications for free speech.

The increasing role played by self-appointed, unrepresentative and often rather small activist groups in shaping public debate has been examined too little. This valuable report helps to fill that gap.

Executive Summary

- The Centre for Media Monitoring (CfMM) was established in 2018 as part of the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) to promote "fair, accurate and responsible reporting of Muslims and Islam"[1] and to help "change the narrative" about them.[2] It publishes thematic reports and complains about individual items of journalism which it deems unfair, inaccurate, or biased.
- CfMM's founder and "lead strategist",[3] Miqdaad Versi, who is also the MCB's spokesman,[4] pins on his X feed an admiring article from the Guardian about his "personal mission to confront… the Islamophobia of the British press" and his "spreadsheet of shame" showing "how flagrantly British papers get their news about Muslims wrong ".[5] (Alas, no fewer than four of this article's claims about the corrections supposedly forced on British newspapers by Versi were themselves wrong, and had to be corrected at the bottom of the online version.)
- CfMM is taken seriously by other parts of the media, too. In June 2025, the BBC's director of news content, Richard Burgess, spoke at a CfMM meeting in Parliament, alongside two Labour MPs, at which the group launched a report attacking the BBC's coverage of Israel-Gaza. The CfMM report complained that the BBC calls the Gaza Ministry of Health, source of Palestinian casualty figures, "Hamas-run" (which it is) and claimed that "sympathetic articles [sic] with emotive, humanising or personal stories of Palestinians appeared only twice as often as those for Israelis".[6] According to CfMM, Burgess praised the report as "thorough".[7] The former Today presenter, Mishal Husain, appeared to promote the report on her X feed, saying that "some of the examples in [the report] deserve to be looked at closely and carefully".[8] The podcaster and former spin-doctor, Alastair Campbell, contributed a supportive quote endorsing CfMM's analysis.[9]
- Many other editors and reporters have attended or spoken at CfMM events, and Versi sat on a working group at the press self-regulator, Ipso. CfMM claims to have been "instrumental in developing Ipso's guidance on the reporting of Muslims and Islam",[10] which closely reflects several of CfMM's demands.[11] It has been "feeding in to the BBC's terminology guidebook" on how to report Islam and claims to have facilitated a focus group on the BBC's behalf.[12] Versi also appears to have links to the Labour Party, attending the Labour Muslim Network's official Iftar in March 2025.[13]

1. https://www.launchgood.com/v4/campaign/centre_for_media_monitoring
2. https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/3433/pdf/ and https://mcusercontent.com/4efd81e7012b9e8ff1197ab2c/files/bc9d4a36-81e1-e750-8337-ce6f4c7045b5/MCB_Annual_Report_2021_2022_Web.pdf
3. https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/CfMM-Annual-Report-2018-2020-digital.pdf
4. https://x.com/miqdaad
5. https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/oct/18/miqdaad-versi-very-polite-fight-against-british-media-islamophobia
6. https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/CfMM-report-2023-24-ePDF-Edited.pdf
7. https://x.com/cfmmuk/status/1935039302020260346
8. https://x.com/MishalHusain/status/1934635204972617855
9. https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/CfMM-report-2023-24-ePDF-Edited.pdf
10. https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/CfMM-Submission-to-Editors-Code-2023.pdf
11. See chapter 7.
12. https://mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/AGMreport_28.01.21_2.02.pdf
13. https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1190626535995303 – 0'48"

- According to the MCB, CfMM delivers masterclasses to journalism students at "all the top universities" and has engaged with "over 1000 journalists, editors, regulators and policymakers".[14] Not all those engagements have been friendly; CfMM has a practice of launching attacks on journalists who writ e a lot about Islamism and Muslims, notably (before his death) the multi-award-winning investigative reporter Andrew Norfolk, who did more than any other to bring the grooming-gang scandal to public attention.[15]
- CfMM claims, in Versi's words, that the British media is one of "the biggest drivers of Islamophobia in the country".[16] It alleges that "misrepresenting Muslims, misusing terminology or misinterpreting Islamic beliefs and practices are common occurrences in the media with almost one in ten articles analysed by CfMM falling under this category."[17] These claims have become an article of faith for many. It claims that almost 60 per cent of news stories about Muslims are negative and cites this as proof of the media's "widespread… Islamophobia".[18] Again, this claim has been widely reported and cited by politicians.[19] In its own words, CfMM is "leading the charge in holding the media to account".[20]
- This report holds CfMM to account. We find that it has exposed, and secured corrections of, false and harmful stories – but only a tiny number. It says it has monitored over 200,000 articles and analysed almost 60,000 "online print and broadcast clips" about Muslims.[21] Across all those, and across its entire seven-year existence, the Ipso database records that only one complaint by CfMM has resulted in a newspaper being required by the regulator to make a correction.[22]
- CfMM also complains directly to news outlets, though it has made very inconsistent claims about the number of corrections it has secured by this route, ranging from 22, to 100, to 300.[23] Even 300 corrections, however, is a minute proportion (around one-tenth of one per cent) of the 260,000 items it claims to have monitored. It does not come close to supporting Versi's and CfMM's sweeping claims of a tide of media Islamophobia, or of almost 10 per cent of stories about Muslims being wrong. Indeed, CfMM, on the "media corrections" section of its website, lists no successful complaint since 2021.[24]
- We find that CfMM's purpose is not simply to challenge factual errors or "correct stories about Muslims". Its other purpose is, in its own words, "taking control of the narrative" about Islam[25] - promoting, and pressurising journalists to accept, a partisan view of the faith held by the MCB and its activists. It also aims to pressurise journalists to avoid any kind of negative story, however true, about Muslims (it has, for instance, attacked the headline "Stampede at Muslim festival kills 31.")[26]
- There is a subtle but important difference between campaigning to ensure that Muslims are not mistreated in the media, and

14. https://mcb.org.uk/initiatives/media-monitoring/
15. See Chapter 4.
16. https://bridge.georgetown.edu/video/the-u-ks-one-man-islamophobia-monitor-miqdaad-versi/
17. https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/CfMM-Submission-to-Editors-Code-2023.pdf
18. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/dec/02/islamophobia-press-muslims-negative
19. https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/british-media-muslims-islam-islamophobia-b1976742.html and https://www.theguardian.com/news/2019/jul/09/most-uk-news-coverage-of-muslims-is-negative-major-study-finds and https://www.politicshome.com/thehouse/article/islamophobia-is-being-accepted-as-a-norm-in-society-we-cannot-stay-silent
20. https://www.launchgood.com/v4/campaign/centre_for_media_monitoring
21. https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/CfMM-Submission-to-Editors-Code-2023.pdf
22. https://www.ipso.co.uk/rulings/?term=centre%20for%20media%20monitoring#content ; in a further three cases the publication had already corrected the mistake, with Ipso requiring "no further action". See also chapter 2 below.
23. See Chapter 2.
24. https://cfmm.org.uk/media-corrections/
25. https://youtu.be/qZvGbmanPig?si=c7msYt6rZgoms06K&t=395
26. https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/CfMM-Submission-to-Editors-Code-2023.pdf

campaigning for the media to normalise a specific and arguably contentious interpretation of Islam. CfMM does both and effectively blurs the line between these different objectives.

- As we show, CfMM seeks to police not just news, but comment and even fictional depictions of Muslims, defining conservative Islamic practice – for instance, head coverings for women - as "normative",[27] and non-conservative practice as incorrect.[28] It ignores the diversity of Muslim opinion and practice on issues such as dress.
- It has criticised TV dramas for showing Muslim characters who do not want to wear a hijab, or who drink alcohol, or who are gay.[29] It has openly taken the side of intimidating mobs staging banned anti-gay demonstrations outside primary schools.[30]
- It publishes a glossary promoting strikingly tendentious interpretations of several contested terms, including Islamism and extremism.[31]
- CfMM claims to support free speech and attacks those "insinuating that we wish to censor and limit criticism of Islam and Muslims".[32] But it explicitly says that press regulators must discourage "insults" against Islam.[33] Nor, it says, should the media be allowed to accuse the authorities of failing to investigate wrongdoing because the perpetrators are Muslim, as in Rotherham.[34] It describes the reporting of grooming gangs as based on "shoddy" underpinnings.[35]
- CfMM pressurises journalists to downplay or ignore Islamist extremism, overwhelmingly the greatest terror threat to the UK. It tells journalists they should never use the terms "Islamism", "Islamic extremism" or "Muslim extremism" at all. It attacks journalists for describing terror groups, including Hamas, as Islamist.[36] It appears to claim that moderate Muslims abandon their "religious identities" for a "version of Islam that has been sanctioned by the state", and that they may even be liberals or government spies.[37]
- CfMM has sought to attack, suppress or downplay media reporting about terrorism and extremism which is, in fact, fair and true. We show that according to CfMM's own published criteria, it is impossible for any report of any Islamist terror attack to be classed as unbiased unless it avoids all mention of the culprit's faith or motivation. CfMM also appears to argue that no terrorist can, by definition, be a Muslim. Some of CfMM's staff have expressed disturbing views about extremism and terrorism.[38]
- And for all CfMM's claims to the moral high ground, we find that its own work is repeatedly inaccurate, unfair or biased to an extent that would be unacceptable in any professional news outlet. Its 60 per cent figure for "Islamophobic" stories about Muslims does not stand up to examination.[39] Its research lacks transparency and rigour, and its claims about its reach and impact in universities

27. https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/CfMM-Annual-Report-2018-2020-digital.pdf - page 238
28. See Chapter 4.
29. https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/CfMM-Annual-Report-2018-2020-digital.pdf - page 238-41
30. See Chapter 4.
31. https://cfmm.org.uk/terminology/
32. https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/CfMM-Annual-Report-2018-2020-digital.pdf
33. https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/CfMM-Submission-to-IMPRESS-Standards-Code-Review-March-2021.pdf, paras 5.3.5 – 5.3.8.
34. Ibid, para 5.3.2 and appendix D; see chapter 4.
35. https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/CfMM-Annual-Report-2018-2020-digital.pdf
36. See Chapter 5.
37. https://cfmm.org.uk/term/moderate-islam/
38. See Chapters 3 and 5.
39. See Chapter 3.

appear to be exaggerated.[40]

- Editors, executives and journalists spoken to by Policy Exchange report different reactions of their employers to CfMM's work. Some appear already to have come to the same conclusions as us. Elsewhere, however, it has succeeded, to some extent, in swaying news outlets when writing about Muslims.
- CfMM and the MCB are part of the campaign to give legal and official force to the concept of "Islamophobia" – an effort bound up, in recent times, with the attempt to impose the definition of this term created by the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on British Muslims. The aim of this campaign, in the words of its own supporters, is to control and prevent conduct "far beyond" anti-Muslim hatred or discrimination (which all can agree are wrong, but which are already illegal). It is to impose "appropriate limits to free speech" when talking about Muslims, and special protections for Muslims.[41] An official Islamophobia definition would give CfMM and its like a significant new weapon.
- This report provides all who need it with the evidence that the Centre for Media Monitoring is a bad-faith actor. It should not be engaged with or taken at face value by journalists, regulators or anyone else.

40. See Chapter 7.

41. https://static1.squarespace.com/static/599c3d2febbd1a90cffdd8a9/t/5bfd1ea3352f531a6170ceee/1543315109493/Islamophobia+Defined.pdf

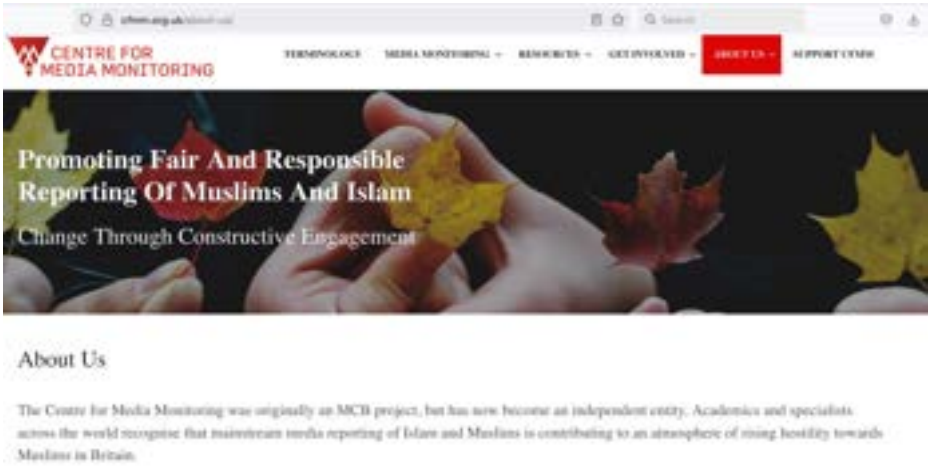
Chapter 1: The Origins of the Centre for Media Monitoring (CfMM): A Problematic Parent

The Centre for Media Monitoring (CfMM) was set up by the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB).[42] CfMM dominates the MCB's work – in the year to December 2023, CfMM accounted for 81 per cent of the MCB's spending on charitable activities. The only published accounts for the MCB, the MCB Charitable Foundation, state that all its paid employees work for CfMM.[43] CfMM's founder and "lead strategist,"[44] Miqdaad Versi, is the MCB's spokesman.[45]

A few hours before this report was published, but after advance copies had been sent round to journalists, CfMM changed the "About us" page on its website – which described it as a "Muslim Council of Britain project"[46] – to claim that it had "now become an independent entity."[47] Unfortunately, it forgot to change other aspects of its online presence, including its donation page ("we are part of the Muslim Council of Britain")[48] and X bio, which continues at the time of writing to call it "the MCB's Centre for Media Monitoring."[49] The MCB, too, continues to describe CfMM as part of its work.[50]

CfMM website as of 5 July 2025

42. https://web.archive.org/web/20250705095910/https://cfmm.org.uk/about-us/
43. Accounts for MCB Charitable Foundation, on Charity Commission website.
44. https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/CfMM-Report-Final-MEDIA-BIAS-GAZA-2023-24-ePDF.pdf
45. https://x.com/miqdaad
46. https://web.archive.org/web/20250705095910/https://cfmm.org.uk/about-us/
47. https://cfmm.org.uk/about-us/
48. https://cfmm.org.uk/donate/
49. https://x.com/cfmmuk?lang=en
50. https://mcb.org.uk/purpose/



CfMM website as of 7 July 2005

The changes were evidence both of CfMM's sensitivity about the MCB link – and of its own bad faith and ineptitude, which we will describe further in this paper. Whatever the true position, readers of what follows below may wish to take any reference to CfMM being part of the MCB to mean "part of, or until this week part of, the MCB." (We have also saved screenshots of all the webpages we reference, copies of all the documents and recordings of all the videos in case of further attempts to rewrite or remove them.)

According to a 2009 report by the Department for Communities and Local Government, the MCB was created and dominated by the Islamist group Jamaat-e-Islami and was a "focus of controversy for its linkages to Islamist movements".[51] In keeping with such origins, the MCB has deeply problematic values, little shared by the British Muslims it claims to represent.

The MCB, terrorism and extremism

In 2001, the MCB opposed a UK government ban[52] on 21 terror organisations, including al-Qaeda, declaring that armed struggle was a way for some people to "claim their rights".[53] This was before 9/11 but after al-Qaeda had already perpetrated three mass-casualty attacks killing hundreds. In 2010, the MCB opposed a ban on Anjem Choudary's al-Muhajiroun, which had by that point been linked to multiple terror attacks in the UK.[54] Choudary is now serving life imprisonment for directing a terror organisation. In 2015, an official UK government review said that the MCB "have consistently opposed programmes by successive governments to prevent terrorism".[55]

The MCB continues to obstruct and misrepresent counter-terrorism policy, claiming that the main deradicalisation programme, Prevent, is a manifestation of "structural Islamophobia"[56] with a "disproportionate focus on Muslims".[57] In fact, the figures at that point, referred to by the MCB itself in the same document, said that more people were referred to

51. https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20120919122719/http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/1170952.pdf - pp40,59
52. https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2001-02-28/debates/bf6251aa-2488-49d1-9fde-37349b5bb156/TerroristOrganisations
53. https://mcb.org.uk/mcb-says-terrorist-list-is-ill-conceived/
54. https://www.ft.com/content/879bae8a-ff69-11de-8f53-00144feabdc0
55. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a8076bfe5274a2e8ab504ab/53163_Muslim_Brotherhood_Review_-_PRINT.pdf - para 38
56. https://mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/SINGLE-SPREAD-Report-020321_compressed.pdf - page 49
57. https://mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/MCB-Briefing-Proposed-Changes-to-Prevent-Following-Shawcross-Review-070223.pdf and https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/aug/03/rishi-sunak-prevent-strategy-conservative-leadership

Prevent for far-right concerns than for Islamism.[58] As an official review found, Prevent's problem is in fact the opposite of what the MCB claims – under-referral of Islamist cases.[59]

For at least seven years, the MCB boycotted Holocaust Memorial Day.[60] It said Muslim girls should wear the hijab in school and that the teaching of music, dance and art to Muslims should be different or restricted.[61] It has been deeply hostile to the UK's Ahmadiyya Muslim minority.[62] It remains dominated by Islamist groups[63] and has accepted extremist bodies to membership, including one dedicated to the persecution of Ahmadis.[64]

Government boycott

Since 2009, the MCB has been boycotted by governments of both main political parties after Labour accused its then Deputy Secretary-General, Daud Abdullah, of supporting attacks on British troops.[65] From 2021, under a new, female Secretary-General, Zara Mohammed, it attempted an image change and sought re-engagement with the government, but was unsuccessful on both counts.

The MCB's case was not helped by Mohammed's then deputy, Mohammed Kozbar, who while in office reposted conspiracy theories about Israel controlling the UK police and having secret plans to kill 2.3 million people. Kozbar also reposted content claiming that Britain is a colony of the US and Israel and that "Zionism is the main source of all problems"; praising the violent group Palestine Action; and defending the extremist group CAGE. [66] Kozbar was dropped as an adviser by the Metropolitan Police in 2024 for his social media activity.[67]

The MCB now appears to have given up on its bid for re-engagement. In January 2025 it elected a new Secretary-General, Wajid Akhter, who advocates British Muslims identifying primarily as Muslim, rather than as British;[68] and has said that "to be a Muslim today is an act of revolutionary defiance – standing at odds with the prevailing culture in many ways".[69] Akhter also said that New Year is a "pagan" event which "usually involves un-Islamic practices" such as "mixed gender events where people wear fashionable clothes, dance and sing songs"; and for Muslims to celebrate it is "the first step on a slippery slope…to disappearing within the dominant culture".[70]

The MCB's worldview

The MCB continues today to paint a largely (though not entirely) one-sided picture of Muslims in Britain, as a suffering and suspect community singled out for unfair attention by the security authorities, struggling with unfair disadvantages, and maligned by their fellow citizens and the media. It seldom (though not never) refers to the other side of the picture - the Muslim Britain that is aspirational, entrepreneurial and successful, and the striking improvements that Britain's Muslims have made in educational achievement, political representation and professional advancement.

The MCB's view is rejected by those it purports to represent. In 2020 polling, 76% of British Muslims said Britain was a good place to be a

58. https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/individuals-referred-to-and-supported-through-the-prevent-programme-april-2021-to-march-2022/individuals-referred-to-and-supported-through-the-prevent-programme-april-2021-to-march-2022
59. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/63e26a08d3bf7f172f6ce87f/Independent_Review_of_Prevent__print_.pdf
60. https://mcb.org.uk/holocaust-memorial-ceremony-mcb-regrets-exclusion-of-palestinian-tragedy/
61. https://image.guardian.co.uk/sys-files/Education/documents/2007/02/20/Schoolinfoguidance.pdf
62. https://web.archive.org/web/20031020205859/http://www.mcb.org.uk/presstext.php?ann_id=52
63. See "representation" section below.
64. https://mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Investigation-Panel-Final-Report-2019_FINAL.pdf
65. https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2009/apr/04/hazel-blears-libel-action-mcb and https://image.guardian.co.uk/sys-files/Guardian/documents/2009/03/23/blears__letter.pdf
66. See Appendix 4.
67. https://www.met.police.uk/foi-ai/metropolitan-police/disclosure-2024/august-2024/information-relating-mrmohammedkozbar/
68. https://muslimmatters.org/2022/02/03/did-the-prophet-wear-glasses-raising-children-resilient-muslims/
69. https://muslimmatters.org/2022/02/03/did-the-prophet-wear-glasses-raising-children-resilient-muslims/
70. https://web.archive.org/web/20130306234832/http://muslimmatters.org/2012/12/28/4-reasons-why-muslims-should-not-celebrate-new-years - a cleaner version is at https://en.minanews.net/four-reasons-why-muslims-shouldn-t-celebrate-new-year-s/

Muslim - much higher than the proportion of the general population (52%) which thought the same, suggesting that negative campaigning from groups such as the MCB has greater effect on those without lived knowledge than on those with it.[71]

The MCB has often made false, exaggerated, misleading, outdated or poorly-evidenced claims to support its grievance and victimhood narrative. In 2021, it posed MPs in front of an MCB-branded placard claiming that "45 per cent of all hate crimes offences targeted Muslims".[72] The actual figure was 2.2 per cent.[73]

In November 2023, the MCB claimed that Muslims were "the most targeted faith group" for hate crime;[74] in March 2024 it claimed that "Muslims are more than twice as likely to be affected [by hate crime] compared to any other religious group";[75] and in October 2024 it claimed that Muslims are "the most affected group" by hate crime.[76]

On the latest statistics available at the time of the first two statements, covering the year to March 2023, there were 3,400 faith hate crimes against Muslims (a population of just under 4 million people) but 1,510 against Jews (a population of less than 300,000 people, one-fifteenth the size).[77] The gap widened still further in 2023/4 – in the statistics release which the third of the MCB statements quoted above refers to. That year, Jews were 12 times more likely than Muslims to be affected or targeted by faith hate crime, and those of "other" religion were also a little more likely to be affected or targeted than Muslims.[78]

The MCB claims that "31 per cent of young children believe Muslims are taking over England".[79] This was based on questionnaires sent to about 60 schools (0.2% of the total) by an activist group more than ten years ago.[80] Miqdaad Versi, the MCB's spokesman (and founder of CfMM), repeated the 31% claim in an article for a national newspaper and added another one, that "37% of Brits would support a political party that would reduce the number of Muslims in the UK."[81] The (even older) research this claim was based on, from 2012, actually said that 37% would be "more likely" to support such a party, and that 23% would be "less likely" – that is, a net of 14%.[82]

The MCB's position on Prevent and counter-terrorism is also at odds with that of most British Muslims, whom 2020 polling showed support Prevent and are actually more willing than non-Muslims to report someone they suspect to the programme.[83] Sara Khan, the then lead Commissioner on Countering Extremism, attacked "so-called Muslim representative bodies" for making "divisive", "dogmatic" and "untrue" claims about Muslims' views on the subject.[84]

The MCB's claim to representativeness

The MCB claims that it "democratically represents a large cross-section of British Muslim communities",[85] and has "over 500 members including mosques, schools, charitable associations and professional networks".[86] Each member has one vote at its meetings. However, only 167 votes were cast at the 2021 election for its Secretary-General, which was online and

71. https://64e09bbc-abdd-42c6-90a8-58992ce46e59.usrfiles.com/ugd/64e09b_b58ae8e9a31541dcb17d15d972c70935.pdf
72. https://twitter.com/paulbristow79/status/1460955957312299016
73. https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2020-to-2021/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2020-to-2021
74. https://mcb.org.uk/islamophobia-awareness-month-2023-muslim-stories-confronting-hate-in-challenging-times/
75. https://mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Hate-Crime-v1.2.pdf
76. https://mcb.org.uk/mcb-responds-to-shocking-hate-crime-statistics/
77. https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2022-to-2023/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2022-to-2023
78. https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hate-crime-england-and-wales-year-ending-march-2024/hate-crime-england-and-wales-year-ending-march-2024
79. https://mcb.org.uk/resources/islamophobia/
80. https://www.theguardian.com/education/2015/may/19/most-children-think-immigrants-are-stealing-jobs-schools-study-shows\
81. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/may/15/islamophobia-semantics-word ; Versi was writing "in a personal capacity".
82. https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2012/sep/16/voters-support-anti-immigrant-party
83. https://64e09bbc-abdd-42c6-90a8-58992ce46e59.usrfiles.com/ugd/64e09b_b58ae8e9a31541dcb17d15d972c70935.pdf
84. https://extremismcommission.blog.gov.uk/2020/03/02/lead-commissioners-statement-on-crest-report-listening-to-british-muslims-policing-extremism-and-prevent/
85. https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/12/02/muslim-islamic-radical-tolerance-think-tank-taj-hargey/
86. https://mcb.org.uk/purpose/

easy to take part in.[87] No figures were given for the 2025 election.

Even 500, however, is perhaps one-eighth (12%) of the total number of mosques, schools, charities and other Muslim organisations in Britain. In 2020, the MCB itself has said that there are about 1,200 mosques in Britain.[88] In 2018, the government estimated there were 1,500.[89] The UK Mosque Directory says there are 2,011.[90] In 2017, the Government said there were 175 Muslim schools.[91] The consultancy CREST estimates that there are more than 3,000 Muslim charities in the UK, though most mosques are charities, leaving perhaps 1,500 to 1,800 after the overlap.[92] There are likely to be a few hundred non-charitable, non-profit organisations, including professional networks, giving a total number of perhaps 3,500 to 4,000 Muslim institutions and third-sector organisations.

The MCB has not published a full list of its members since October 2018, when it claimed 20 national affiliates, 12 regional affiliates and 413 local affiliates – a total of 445.[93] But there was significant overlap between these. One organisation, the UK Islamic Mission (UKIM), a British associate of the Pakistani Islamist party Jamaat-e-Islami, accounted for 29 members, one national affiliation and 28 local branches. The Islamic Forum of Europe (IFE), a British associate of the Bangladeshi version of Jamaat-e-Islami, accounted for 15 members. Many other organisations had multiple memberships. Other nominally separate members, including many mosques, are controlled by the IFE (now renamed the Muslim Community Association) or UKIM and have or have had the same or closely overlapping leadership as the local branch of that organisation.

According to the MCB's then Acting Treasurer (and candidate for Deputy Secretary General), Lamine Konate, writing a few months ago, the organisation is "viewed by many Muslim communities in the North as a mainly London-centric organisation with little relevance or understanding of the issues facing their communities."[94] The MCB itself admitted in a report published in 2023 that "we need to be relevant to our affiliates", implying that it is currently not.[95] Polling done for Policy Exchange in 2016 found that only one in five British Muslims looked to engage local or national government through specifically Muslim organisations, and of this sub-sample only 9 per cent chose the MCB – that is, 2 per cent of Muslims overall.[96]

The last time they were listed – in 2023 – less than a quarter of members of the MCB's national council were women, compared to more than half of Muslim MPs.[97] The MCB's current named office-bearers are all male.[98] People of non-South Asian descent – about 40 per cent of British Muslims[99] – are also underrepresented on the council and Islamist groups are very heavily represented on it.[100] Though not a religious organisation, there is high and overt religiosity in the MCB, which may exclude, deter or underrepresent the significant numbers of British Muslims who are less pious in their practice. Under the MCB's constitution, any officeholder or council member who engages in "acts contrary to the Shariah" can be removed.[101] Some MCB posts can only be held by "experts in Shariah".[102]

87. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/31/muslim-council-of-britain-elects-zara-mohammed-first-female-leader
88. https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/9582/html/
89. https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2018-06-14/HL8658
90. https://www.mosquedirectory.co.uk/ Although the 'about' web page says there are 2011 mosques, this note comes up by clicking 'about': "There is [sic] currently in excess of 2500 listings and this is growing on a daily basis".
91. https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2017-06-21/HL17
92. https://crestresearch.ac.uk/resources/british-muslims-charities/
93. https://web.archive.org/web/20181005001524/https://mcb.org.uk/about/affiliates/
94. https://mcb.org.uk/agm-january-2025-candidates/
95. https://mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/MCB-Annual-Report-2021-2022-Web.pdf
96. https://policyexchange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/PEXJ5037_Muslim_Communities_FINAL.pdf
97. https://mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/MCB-Annual-Report-2021-2022-Web.pdf - pages 64-5
98. https://mcb.org.uk/leadership/ as accessed in March 2025.
99. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam_in_the_United_Kingdom#/media/File:British_Muslims_by_Ethnic_Group.png
100. https://mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/MCB-Annual-Report-2021-2022-Web.pdf - pages 64-5.
101. https://www.mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/MCB_Constitution_FINAL-2013.pdf
102. https://www.mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/MCB_Constitution_FINAL-2013.pdf

The MCB and free speech

The MCB was established back in 1997 according to a blueprint drawn up three years earlier by the National Interim Committee on Muslim Unity (NICMU). The leaders of NICMU were also involved in the United Kingdom Action Committee on Islamic Affairs (UKACIA), which was set up in response to the Rushdie Affair of 1989. UKACIA unsuccessfully lobbied the Government to ban Salman Rushdie's novel *The Satanic Verses* and tried to persuade the Government to extend the then-existing blasphemy laws to include Islam. From the outset, then, the origins of the MCB were bound up with an attempt to restrict free speech in the UK, specifically in relation to Islam.

Blasphemy laws in England and Wales were abolished in 2008, but two years earlier the Labour government had overseen the passage of the Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006.[103] This introduced a new offence of stirring up hatred against persons on religious grounds. But the Act represented only a partial victory for groups like the MCB, which had campaigned for additional causes criminalising "insult" and "abuse" of religion; these were removed from the final draft of the Act in the House of Lords in the interests of free expression.[104] For an offence to be committed under the 2006 Act, words, behaviour, written material, recordings or programmes must be both threatening *and* intended to stir up religious hatred. As the Crown Prosecution Service website states, "Threatening is the operative word, not abusive or insulting."[105]

As Policy Exchange has described, measures such as the 2006 Racial and Religious Hatred Act have continued to be judged insufficient by those demanding more forceful government action against 'Islamophobia'.[106] The campaign around this issue has continued unabated over the last two decades. And the question of what the media says about matters pertaining to Islam has been a central site of contention.

This background matters because it reflects much about the impulses that brought CfMM into being. It is the subsidiary of an organisation (the MCB) that from its very beginning sought both to combat what it perceived as blasphemy and to "protect" Islam from what it deemed unfair representation. Moreover, this desire to control the boundaries of permissible speech is consonant with the wider attempt of the MCB to determine what counts as normative Islam.

103. https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/1
104. See Caroline Cox and John Marks, *The West, Islam and Islamism*, London: Civitas, 2006, p.132-133; and Dominic Raab, *The Assault on Liberty*, London: Fourth Estate, 2009, p.59.
105. https://www.cps.gov.uk/legal-guidance/racist-and-religious-hate-crime-prosecution-guidance
106. https://policyexchange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/On-Islamophobia.pdf

Chapter 2: Policing the Media: Complaints and Corrections

CfMM began work in 2018,[107] with a formal launch in Parliament, hosted by Naz Shah MP (then the Shadow Minister of State for Women and Equalities) in July 2019.[108] It describes its purposes as being to monitor the British media on how it reports on Islam and Muslims, "create an evidence base on how Islam and Muslims are reported"; "develop insights on potential areas of improvement through evidence based analyses, reports and guidelines"; "advocate change through constructive engagement with key stakeholders"; and "empower Muslim communities to proactively engage with the media and help change the narrative."[109]

Its main outputs are complaints to media outlets or regulators about specific items of journalism it considers inaccurate or biased; thematic reports, with eight currently shown on its website; responses to enquiries and consultations; training for journalists and journalism students; and advice for Muslim communities on dealing with the media.

CfMM believes that, in the words of Miqdaad Versi, the British media is one of "the biggest drivers of Islamophobia in the country".[110] It alleges that "misrepresenting Muslims, misusing terminology or misinterpreting Islamic beliefs and practices are common occurrences in the media with almost one in ten articles analysed by CfMM falling under this category."[111] However, CfMM's own statistics for complaints and corrections do not come close to substantiating these charges.

How many corrections?

CfMM has made many different claims about the number of corrections it has secured from news outlets. Its website claims "over 100."[112] The MCB's 2019/20 annual report, covering the period July 2019-December 2020, claims CfMM secured "over 300" corrections in those 17 months alone.[113] A CfMM fundraising page claims "nearly 300" in its first year alone,[114] though the link given leads back to the webpage which says 100. Also in 2020, after two years of operation, CfMM said it had achieved "over 250 corrections".[115] In May 2023, it claimed it had secured "hundreds" of corrections.[116] Another part of its website, at the time of writing, leaves the number to be filled in, saying CfMM staff have "successfully secured over XXX corrections from major media outlets over the past 3 years".[117] The "media corrections" section of its website lists only 22 corrections.[118]

107. https://mcb.org.uk/initiatives/media-monitoring/
108. https://mcb.org.uk/launch-of-the-centre-for-media-monitoring/
109. https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/3433/pdf/ and https://mcusercontent.com/4efd81e7012b9e8ff1197ab2c/files/bc9d4a36-81e1-e750-8337-ce6f4c7045b5/MCB_Annual_Report_2021_2022_Web.pdf
110. https://bridge.georgetown.edu/video/the-u-ks-one-man-islamophobia-monitor-miqdaad-versi/
111. https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/CfMM-Submission-to-Editors-Code-2023.pdf
112. https://cfmm.org.uk/media-corrections/
113. http://web.archive.org/web/20210131124430/https:/mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Annual-Report-2019-2020.pdf
114. https://www.launchgood.com/v4/campaign/centre_for_media_monitoring
115. https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/CfMM-Response-to-Editors-Code-review.27.03.2020.pdf
116. https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/CfMM-Submission-to-Editors-Code-2023.pdf
117. https://cfmm.org.uk/corrections/
118. https://cfmm.org.uk/media-corrections/

How many articles has CfMM examined?

Whether 300, 250, 100, 22 or whatever figure CfMM decides to fill in later, the number of corrections is, by its own account, minute compared to the number of media reports it has examined. As with its claims about corrections, CfMM's claims of the numbers of articles it has scrutinised vary wildly – itself a sign of unreliability. It stated in 2022 that it "monitors and analyses thousands of articles and broadcast clips daily".[119] If this means at least 2,000 articles or clips each day, that would be around 730,000 a year, or almost 3 million to that point since its foundation in 2018.

In May 2023, CfMM said it had "monitored over 200,000 articles and analysed almost 60,000 online print & broadcast clips".[120] But the MCB's 2019/20 annual report said that CfMM had "analysed 290,000 articles and broadcast clips" since July 2019 alone[121] – more in little over a year of the period 2019-2023 than it later claimed to have monitored and/or analysed over the whole four years. The MCB's 2022 annual report, published in January 2023, gave a much lower number, saying CfMM had "analysed almost 50,000 online articles and 5,500 broadcast clips".[122] (It is not clear whether or how CfMM distinguishes between "monitoring" and "analysis". Sometimes, as in some of the claims above, it makes no distinction between them; sometimes it does, or appears to.)

CfMM's figures do not come close to supporting its claim that 10% of stories about Muslims are inaccurate

Even taking CfMM's highest claimed figure for corrections (300) and its lowest claimed figure for the number of items analysed (55,500), 300 corrections is only around one half of one per cent of the number of items it claims to have analysed. If it is 100 corrections out of 290,000 items analysed, that is an inaccuracy rate of around one-thirtieth of one per cent. If it is 100 out of 3 million, that is around one-three-hundredth of one per cent. Clearly, none of these figures come anywhere close to supporting CfMM's claim that 10 per cent of stories about Muslims are inaccurate. Nor, of course, do we know how many unsuccessful complaints CfMM has made, or what its success rate is.

119. https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/CfMM-Submission-Online-Safety-Bill-Impact-on-Muslims.pdf
120. https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/CfMM-Submission-to-Editors-Code-2023.pdf
121. http://web.archive.org/web/20210131124430/https:/mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Annual-Report-2019-2020.pdf
122. https://mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/MCB-Annual-Report-2021-2022-Web.pdf

Persistent – but unsuccessful – complainants

A more reliable yardstick for CfMM's activity and success rate is its complaints to third parties which publish their own records. CfMM claims to have had "more wins at Ipso [the press regulator] than any other organisation".[123] However, a search of Ipso's rulings database, which goes back well before CfMM's establishment, finds a grand total of one case brought by CfMM from which Ipso required a newspaper to make a correction - in December 2020, more than four years ago.[124]

In a further three cases brought by CfMM, the most recent almost three years ago, Ipso found that a breach of its Editors' Code had occurred but that the newspaper had already corrected the error before CfMM complained to Ipso and that "no further action" was required.[125]

CfMM, the MCB and Versi have certainly been prolific *complainants* to Ipso – but their record of wins is low. Over the last decade they have between them clocked up 44 complaints on Ipso's rulings database. Of these, only five (11%) resulted in newspapers being required to publish corrections or adjudications. In a further 12 cases (27%) there was a breach of the Editors' Code but it had already been corrected or other sufficient action taken.[126]

This, to repeat, is across ten years and, by Versi and CfMM's own account, hundreds of thousands of monitored articles. Ipso complaints also sometimes end up in informal resolutions with newspapers, which do not appear in its rulings database. However, these are likely to have been among those for which CfMM has claimed victory as direct complaints to newspapers.

As for broadcasters, a search of the Ofcom website finds no mention of any complaint, successful or otherwise, by CfMM. Ofcom has, however, repeatedly sanctioned UK-based Islamic broadcasters, notably the Islam Channel, for racism, hate speech or lying: maybe CfMM is looking in the wrong direction.[127] (In fact, CfMM staff have repeatedly appeared on the Islam Channel, in at least one case making disturbing statements about terrorism on it – see Chapter 5 below.)

Re-using the same, now rather old, examples

Over many years, successive CfMM submissions to official enquiries and consultations have repeatedly used the same or several of the same 10-20 stories, often many years old, as examples of inaccurate and "Islamophobic" journalism. In the group's latest published submission, in 2023, the newest examples given were from 2020. Some old favourites had been published as long as 15 years before.[128]

Clearly, therefore, this part of the "evidence base" collected by CfMM cannot hope to support its claim that there is a tide of Islamophobic falsehood washing through the British media. Nor is it clear that CfMM even makes very many complaints any more. The most recent listing on the "media corrections" page of its website is dated July 2021.[129] Its most recent (unsuccessful) complaint in Ipso's rulings database is about a story published in April 2023, more than two years ago.[130] Versi made two

123. https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/CfMM-Submission-to-Editors-Code-2023.pdf

124. https://www.ipso.co.uk/rulings/?term=centre+for+media+monitoring - figures as of May 2025.

125. ibid

126. https://www.ipso.co.uk/rulings/ Terms searched were Centre for Media Monitoring, CfMM, Muslim Council of Britain, MCB and Miqdaad Versi, which produced 44 results of which two were joint mentions. The names of the other staff members at CfMM – Faisal Hanif, Rizwana Hamid and Amanda Morris - were also searched, producing no results. Figures as of May 2025.

127. https://www.ofcom.org.uk/tv-radio-and-on-demand/broadcast-standards/decision-islam-channel-ltd/ ; https://www.ofcom.org.uk/tv-radio-and-on-demand/broadcast-standards/decision-ahlebait-tv-networks/ ; https://www.ofcom.org.uk/tv-radio-and-on-demand/broadcast-standards/decision-abu-dhabi-media-company-pjsc/ ; https://www.ofcom.org.uk/tv-radio-and-on-demand/broadcast-standards/decision-islam-channel-limited/

128. https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/CfMM-Submission-to-Editors-Code-2023.pdf - for instance, a Rod Liddle column cited, which was published in 2009, and a Daily Star story from 2008.

129. https://cfmm.org.uk/media-corrections/

130. https://www.ipso.co.uk/rulings/?term=centre+for+media+monitoring – search made in April 2025.

further complaints in his own name, also both unsuccessful, in 2025.

Of course, none of the foregoing should be taken to imply that newspapers and broadcasters never get anything wrong. They do. But another of CfMM's characteristics is to misconstrue their motives. It will sometimes treat things which are simple mistakes, caused by the rush and pressures of producing a newspaper or programme, as deliberate, calculated attacks. Or it will seize on a minor error (such as a picture caption) in a broadly accurate story to attempt to discredit the entire story.[131]

131. https://x.com/cfmmuk/status/1285887523890376704

Chapter 3: How CfMM assesses the Media: A Case Study

The other part of CfMM's claimed evidence base is its thematic studies. To date, it has published eight of these. The most substantial was the November 2021 report by Faisal Hanif, *The British Media's Coverage of Muslims and Islam* 2018-20 (hereafter the Hanif report). This purported to "reveal… the sheer scale of negative reporting associated with Muslims in the UK".[132] It also presents a valuable case study for the approach adopted by CfMM and for this reason, this chapter subjects it to in-depth analysis.

CfMM's Miqdaad Versi said the report proved it was right to say that "Islamophobia has now passed the 'mainstream media test'". Describing a handful of successful libel claims brought by Muslim plaintiffs as "the price [the media] are willing to pay to misrepresent Muslims", Versi said: "Some might say those are only the worst cases, not indicative of the media as a whole. Yet the report dispels this myth by showing how widespread the issue is, based on excruciatingly detailed analysis of more than 48,000 print articles and 5,500 TV clips that mentioned Muslims or Islam. Sixty per cent of the articles and almost half of all clips analysed associated negative aspects and behaviour with Muslims or Islam… Little wonder Islamophobia is so common in society."[133] Other findings included that 14 per cent of articles about Muslims were "biased" or "very biased" and that almost 10 per cent "misrepresent Muslims and/or Islam".[134]

CfMM's definition of "negative" articles

The 60 per cent finding was widely reported[135] and has been repeated by CfMM many times since to further its line and that of the MCB that Muslims are a maligned, suspect community. It has also been amplified by MPs, including the then Labour frontbencher Naz Shah.[136] But closer examination of the study shows that CfMM's and Versi's presentation of it as proof of "widespread" media "Islamophobia" is fundamentally wrong.

This becomes clear when one reads, on page 31, that CfMM's "top 3 offenders" are "AFP [Agence-France Press], Reuters and Associated Press".[137] These are the three main international newswires, publishing almost entirely sober, factual and straight reporting – more or less at the opposite end of the spectrum from the usual suspects of the right-wing tabloids.

132. https://cfmm.org.uk/cfmm-report-british-medias-coverage-of-muslims-and-islam-2018-2020-launched/
133. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/dec/02/islamophobia-press-muslims-negative
134. https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/CfMM-Annual-Report-2018-2020-digital.pdf - page 30,31.
135. https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/british-media-muslims-islam-islamophobia-b1976742.html
136. https://www.politicshome.com/thehouse/article/islamophobia-is-being-accepted-as-a-norm-in-society-we-cannot-stay-silent
137. https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/CfMM-Annual-Report-2018-2020-digital.pdf - page numbers refer to the report, not the pdf.

Can it be that CfMM counts even a straight, accurate newswire-type report of, say, an Islamist terror attack in its 60 per cent figure of negative "Islamophobic" and "offender" journalism? Remarkably, yes. Pages 104-5 of its study list examples of journalism which CfMM deems "offending".[138] These include an AP report of an Islamist terror attack in Manchester (for using the phrase "knife-wielding man yelling Islamic slogans" - an accurate account of what happened)[139] and other factual accounts of Islamist terror attacks.[140]

In CfMM's terms, is it therefore "Islamophobic" for the media to report factually on an Islamist terror attack? Even they may not believe such reports should be totally prohibited. The report says it does "not judge whether the information [in the negative stories] is correct nor if it should have been reported on or not".[141] What CfMM does appear to want, however, is for all references to the attackers' faith or Islamist motives to be suppressed – which would, of course, be much more inaccurate than now.

CfMM's definition of "bias"

CfMM's scoring system for "bias" makes this explicit. As it explains, it evaluates a media article by testing it against five questions. To achieve a CfMM rating of "not biased", the answer to all five must be no.[142] The first question is "Does the article associate Islam or Muslims with negative behaviour?"[143] It therefore appears impossible, according to CfMM, for any account of any Islamist terror attack to be unbiased, however truthful or factual it is, unless it avoids all mention of the culprit's faith.

With this test CfMM appears, in effect, to be saying that Islam cannot be negative and that it is impermissible for any news report to make any kind of negative association with it – an extraordinarily sweeping demand, made by no other interest group we can think of. Yet this is not the only occasion on which CfMM has given air to such a view. In a separate publication, an academic, Salman al-Azami, complained that "negative attitudes towards Islam leads to negative attitude towards its adherents".[144] CfMM has also stated in some of its training sessions that its principal objective is to "counter the current negative media narrative surrounding Muslims and Islam".[145]

138. ibid
139. https://www.gmp.police.uk/news/greater-manchester/news/news/2019/november/a-man-who-stabbed-three-people-during-a-planned-attack-at-victoria-train-station-on-new-years-eve-has-been-jailed-for-life/
140. https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/CfMM-Annual-Report-2018-2020-digital.pdf - page numbers refer to the report, not the pdf.
141. Ibid, page 95.
142. CfMM-Annual-Report-2018-2020-digital.pdf and https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/CfMM-Quarterly-Report.pdf - page 11
143. ibid
144. https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/CfMM-Quarterly-Report-Oct-Dec-2018.pdf
145. https://youtu.be/qZvGbmanPig?si=KHUG-PVS6Aq28IN4N&t=269

By the same token, CfMM's 2023 submission to Ipso attacked as "problematic" a number of non-terrorism related news stories which accurately reported negative events involving Muslims, including the headline "Stampede at Muslim festival kills 31" – a factual account of what happened.[146] The deaths did occur at a Muslim religious festival – how else should it be described? In the same submission, CfMM also objected to the headline "Devout Muslims slice open heads with swords during Ashura festival ritual." This also happened, as it does regularly during Ashura. No doubt CfMM dislikes how this makes some of Islam's more devoted adherents look, but it is perfectly true.[147]

There is also a category called "mixed bias" – articles which CfMM states contain both positive and negative sentiments about Islam (known to most as "balanced", that is, not biased). *The Economist* is cited in this category for an article about Muslims in the West which is broadly favourable but "mentions unrepresentative 'Jihadist' terrorist attacks in the West as well as generalisations about Islam coming to Europe 'by the sword'."[148] It is a historical fact that the Umayyad caliphate took the Iberian peninsula by military conquest. And does CfMM believe that terrorist attacks should not be mentioned because they are "unrepresentative"?

Reporting statements made by others

CfMM also appears to believe that merely reporting or publishing "negative" statements about Muslims made by others constitutes bias and should not be allowed. The 2021 Hanif report thus attacks the *Financial Times* for supposedly publishing a claim by France's president, Emmanuel Macron, that a significant proportion of French Muslims "live in lawless council estates where parents are poisoning the minds of little girls while covering their bodies under burkas".[149] This is not exactly what Macron in fact said – though he did say that "small girls aged three or four are wearing a full veil, separated from boys, and, from a very young age, separated from the rest of society, raised in hatred of France's values."[150] Whether or not this is true, it is of course legitimate to report it.

Comment pieces

It is striking that two of the three specific articles the 2021 study cites as "very biased" and four of the five cited for "antagonistic bias" are, in fact, comment pieces.[151] Does CfMM understand that the whole purpose of a comment piece is to express a point of view?

CfMM's 2023 Ipso submission attacks numerous expressions of opinion, including an interview with the anti-Islamist Muslim Taj Hargey in which he states that "the burka is the fifth column… we will wake in the Islamic Republic of Britain".[152] At the launch of CfMM's 2021 study, Hanif attacked newspapers for citing Muslims who "like to throw other Muslims under the bus".[153] Was he suggesting that Muslims should not be allowed to criticise other Muslims?

146. https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/CfMM-Submission-to-Editors-Code-2023.pdf
147. Ibid.
148. Ibid, page 45.
149. https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/CfMM-Annual-Report-2018-2020-digital.pdf - page 71/2.
150. https://www.ft.com/content/8e459097-4b9a-4e04-a344-4262488e7754
151. https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/CfMM-Annual-Report-2018-2020-digital.pdf - page 36 and 42
152. https://www.thetimes.com/article/taj-hargey-interview-the-burka-is-a-fifth-column-we-will-wake-in-the-islamic-republic-of-britain-5wqhk0q8m and https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/CfMM-Submission-to-Editors-Code-2023.pdf
153. https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?ref=watch_permalink&v=258818179566131 – 1:38:58

Unsatisfactory or unclear methods

The methodology of the Hanif report, as of CfMM's other thematic studies, is at best opaque – though in a rare example of understatement, the document itself admits that its methods are "subjective".[154] As noted above, it does describe the wholly unsatisfactory method by which it evaluates a story's supposed bias. But it does not say how it evaluates the other wrongs it purports to find – misrepresentation of Muslims and Islam (which, as stated, it claims occurs in almost 10% of articles scrutinised), generalisations about Muslims and Islam (7% of articles), and inaccurate images or headlines (2% of articles).[155]

It does not define what it means by the terms misrepresentation or generalisation. From the examples of misrepresentation given - which include referring to Islamic State as Islamic,[156] or referring to Hamas as Islamist[157] - a "misrepresentation" in CfMM terms may simply mean "a story we do not like" or "a story which mentions a different interpretation of Islam from ours". (For more about CfMM's attempts to enforce its own interpretations of Islam, or to misrepresent Islamism and terrorism, see chapters 4 and 5.) The study does not give a full list of those stories it has evaluated as biased, negative or misrepresentative, but the examples it does give are sufficient to discredit it.

The study is not particularly clear about how it has chosen the articles it evaluates. It also appears to treat Mail Online's UK website, Mail Online's US website, Mail Online's Australian website and the *Daily Mail* and *Mail on Sunday* print titles as separate outlets, even though they publish much of the same content, potentially multiple-counting some stories and potentially, therefore, inflating the number of "negative" and "biased" stories published by "right-wing" media outlets.[158]

The study is titled "*The British media's coverage of Muslims and Islam 2018-20*", but the text says that it actually only covers the period from October 2018 to September 2019.[159] Some of the most indisputable examples of misrepresentation cited by CfMM – libel settlements in favour of Muslim plaintiffs, to which CfMM devotes ten pages of the report – actually relate to stories published outside either of these periods. The study also includes several substantial outlets which are not British, such as the Associated Press and Agence-France Presse.

154. https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/CfMM-Annual-Report-2018-2020-digital.pdf page 25-6 et seq.
155. Ibid, page 30-31
156. Ibid, page 71
157. Ibid, pages 84-6
158. Ibid, p27, Appendix E
159. Ibid, p. 17

Chapter 4: Controlling the Narrative

Given the weakness of the "evidence base" assembled by CfMM – as outlined over the previous two chapters – it seems natural to ask: what is the organisation's real purpose?

CfMM attacks what it calls "a small minority with powerful voices in the media and elsewhere who will seek to misrepresent our intentions by insinuating that we wish to censor and limit criticism of Islam and Muslims."[160] Yet that, as we will show, is exactly what it does wish to do.

CfMM claims it is committed to free speech, but its words in fact suggest the opposite. It says that "whilst no one wants to curb free speech nor see backdoor state regulation of the media… neither does anyone want to see news publishers being given carte blanche to publish what they want."[161]

Furthermore, CfMM states explicitly that it wants to "take control of the narrative" about Islam.[162]

This chapter examines exactly what that means – for CfMM to "control" what is said about Islam – and shows how this is really about promoting a particular view of the faith.

Self-appointed arbiters of Islam

In 2018, the MCB submitted a briefing to IPSO, the Independent Press Standards Organisation, which helps regulate most of the UK's newspapers and magazines. It bemoaned a lack of "religious literacy" in

160. https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/CfMM-Annual-Report-2018-2020-digital.pdf
161. https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/CfMM-Submission-Online-Safety-Bill-Impact-on-Muslims.pdf
162. https://youtu.be/qZvGbmanPig?si=c7msYt6rZgoms06K&t=395

the mainstream media and put itself forward as an authoritative source for media organisations to consult on religious matters. It stated:

> *In articles referring to Islam or Muslims, it is important to understand the nuances of the faith and that there are many schools of thought. Journalists should not automatically buy into a pre-existing narrative that Islam is counter to British values and human rights. It is important to do sufficient research to ensure that the story is accurate and counter arguments have been presented.* ***This can be achieved by engaging with Islamic academic experts and scholars or umbrella bodies such as the Muslim Council of Britain.***[163]

CfMM has taken up the MCB's mission of promoting and increasing "religious literacy" regarding Muslims and Islam.[164] But what does this mean in practice?

CfMM promotes conservative forms of Islam

One of CfMM's key charges is that the media "misrepresents" Islam. But what it sometimes means by this is that the media does not endorse a conservative view of Islam. For instance, it attacked the Muslim writer Qanta Ahmed for "misrepresenting Muslim behaviour and belief" [165] after she wrote in *The Spectator* that there was "no basis in Islam for the niqab",[166] the women's garment which includes a full-face veil covering everything except the eyes.

But there is no explicit basis for the niqab in the Quran or the hadith (the reported sayings and deeds of the Prophet). The ulama (Islamic scholars) "generally agree that it is not required dress for women".[167] The vast majority of British Muslim women do not wear the niqab (and almost no woman outside Saudi Arabia wore it until Saudi money and influence spread through the Islamic world). Even CfMM admits that only "a minority of scholars consider it to be obligatory".[168]

CfMM has also described the hijab, a head covering for women which shows the face, as "a normative Islamic practice".[169] This, too, is disputable. It is not clear how many British Muslim women wear the hijab, but very substantial numbers do not. Among Muslim Britain's elected female representatives - the 13 Muslim women MPs – 11, or 85 per cent, do not wear the hijab.[170] Is CfMM in effect taking it upon itself to decide what constitutes normative Islam?

The same impulse can be seen elsewhere. For instance, the Hanif report on the British media and Islam includes a (very telling) section on portrayals of Muslims in fiction. This singles out the Channel 4 drama *Ackley Bridge* for depicting a Muslim teenager drinking alcohol and chafing against her hijab. It also criticises a *Coronation Street* storyline showing how a Muslim character, Rana Nazir, "comes out as a homosexual against the traditions and beliefs of her family" and how her "oppressive family, culture and religion prevented her from 'coming out' sooner."[171] It calls for "issues affecting the main body of Muslims who adhere to orthodox beliefs and positions [to be] given more prominence" in TV drama.[172] CfMM has said that "fiction can be completely fantasised, but it should

163. https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Briefing-for-IPSO-Reporting-on-Islam-and-Muslims-in-UK-press.pdf
164. https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/3433/pdf/
165. https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/CfMM-Quarterly-Report.pdf
166. https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/islam4/
167. https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=OZbyz_Hr-eIC&pg=PA119&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false
168. https://cfmm.org.uk/term/hijab-khimar-niqab-burqa/
169. https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/CfMM-Annual-Report-2018-2020-digital.pdf - page 238.
170. Based on their official pictures on the parliamentary website.
171. https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/CfMM-Annual-Report-2018-2020-digital.pdf - page 241.
172. Ibid, page 284.

still not be offensive."[173] The underlying ethos is that – in its view – such behaviours are offensive, or at least can never be properly Islamic.

CfMM says regulators should discourage the "insulting" of Islam

In 2021, CfMM responded to a consultation by Impress on its code of practice for journalists. Impress is the alternative regulator to Ipso recognised by the state-backed Press Recognition Panel set up after the Leveson inquiry. No national newspaper has signed up to it, but some websites have.

CfMM said Impress's Leveson-compliant code and guidance for the media was "better than Ipso's". But it still, they said, had several weaknesses, including a statement that religious beliefs or practices "may be subject to the fiercest criticisms, insults or ridicule".[174] CfMM criticised this provision, saying it showed "a degree of myopia when it comes to the real-world implications of such criticisms, insults and ridicule of religious beliefs and practice… To ridicule a religious practice is, in fact, to ridicule those people who perform that practice in their daily lives." [175]

CfMM told the regulator that while "debate and discussion are to be encouraged in this arena, insults and ridicule are not".[176] And in 2020 CfMM's Amanda Morris said she "wished there were" a law against mocking Islam.[177]

Speaking of the activities of the magazine Charlie Hebdo, which publishes mockery and criticism of Islam, including cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed, Morris said: "I don't think that's just purely criticism. I think that could be considered incitement."[178] Eight of Charlie Hebdo's staff, and four others, were murdered by Islamist terrorists in 2015.

In similar vein, CfMM called in 2023 for "a new provision [to] be added to the [Ipso] Code prohibiting the levelling of abuse against any vulnerable group". It stated this should operate at "lower thresholds than… the criminal law" and was needed to "prevent columnists using newspapers as a loudspeaker to abuse any vulnerable group without a public interest justification."[179] Ironically, CfMM has elsewhere complained about the suggestion that "Muslims receive special treatment",[180] but here it seemed to be calling explicitly for just such treatment.

CfMM also objects to the fact that the discrimination clause in Ipso's code only applies to individuals. It seeks to extend the provision to cover allegedly "discriminatory" references to entire faiths, faith groups or even buildings and institutions. As its staffer Amanda Morris put it, "if a newspaper publishes any sort of reference to… a group, that doesn't fall under the discrimination clause, unfortunately. And this is something that I have personally pushed and asked Ipso to look into, to increasing, to widening the discrimination clause, because I believe that this is unfair… Discrimination should apply to groups or at the very least to institutions, such as schools or clubs or organisations or mosques."[181] Again, this is a demand for special treatment (for Muslim or other faith schools as

173. https://youtu.be/qZvGbmanPig?si=VZg-C0F_ui2m15_Uq&t=3490
174. https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/CfMM-Submission-to-IMPRESS-Standards-Code-Review-March-2021.pdf, para 5.3.5
175. Ibid, para 5.3.6
176. Ibid, para 5.3.8
177. https://youtu.be/qZvGbmanPig?si=-NL6db-GFVFjuetrr&t=4190
178. https://youtu.be/qZvGbmanPig?si=KU-zoLAF0a8CTiYC1&t=4150
179. https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/CfMM-Submission-to-Editors-Code-2023.pdf - recommendation 17 and para 3.10.1
180. https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/CfMM-Annual-Report-2018-2020-digital.pdf - page 49
181. https://youtu.be/qZvGbmanPig?si=wC-tycJ7J-DDkv4ZL&t=3033

opposed to secular schools, for instance.)

CfMM says journalists should not be allowed to accuse the authorities of failing to investigate criminality where the perpetrators are Muslim, as in Rotherham

In the Impress consultation response, CfMM said Impress's code should be strengthened to prevent "language that has been proven to potentially incite hatred in the past".[182] It quoted, as one example of language that should be prevented, the following Rod Liddle paragraph:

> *"I've been trying to interest people in the chicanery and vote-fixing which may have occurred during the Peterborough byelection – but… people don't want to know. In short, the scandal is being Rotherhamed. That is my word, a nonce word, for turning a blind eye to serious criminal activity because the people involved are Muslim and we don't want to upset them."*[183]

CfMM has attacked the charges that grooming gangs in places such as Rotherham "have benefited from political correctness" or that Muslims have been "given some special privileges from law enforcement agencies when they commit crimes", claiming this is based on "shoddy" underpinnings.[184] In respect of grooming gangs these charges, as official enquiries have found, are accurate.[185]

In evidence to parliament, CfMM listed a series of terms it said were "problematic". These included "grooming gang". As CfMM explained: "Despite 'grooming gang' not being a legal category, there is widespread usage of it in the media when linked to Muslim men suggesting that there is a link between the actions of a few criminals with the religion of Islam when in fact their actions are anti-religious."[186]

In 2024, CfMM published a report attacking GB News for an alleged "routine delegitimisation of Islam and Muslims," referring among other things to its reporting of "so-called 'grooming gangs'".[187] By then it had, of course, long been established, including by multiple court cases and official reports, that grooming gangs were and are real. There was also significant evidence that British Muslims, in particular British-Pakistanis, were overrepresented in the offender ranks relative to their population; and that the authorities had failed to act for fear of being accused of racism. This year, the point was again emphasised by Baroness Casey's national audit on group-based child sexual exploitation and abuse.[188]

Targeting newspapers and journalists

CfMM has stated that newspapers should be "flooded" with complaints to drain their resources and deter them from doing stories. As Amanda Morris put it: "We need to make it so that newspapers know that if they don't verify what they are reporting, they are going to get flooded with people emailing them and complaining. And that will discourage them from doing it in the first place, because it costs them, in effect, money, because they have to pay their staff for every hour that they are looking at

182. https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/CfMM-Submission-to-IMPRESS-Standards-Code-Review-March-2021.pdf, para 5.3.2
183. Ibid, para 5.3.2 and Appendix D
184. https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/CfMM-Annual-Report-2018-2020-digital.pdf - page 122
185. https://www.rotherham.gov.uk/downloads/file/279/independent-inquiry-into-child-sexual-exploitation-in-rotherham and https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a8152f4ed915d74e33fd945/46966_Report_of_Inspection_of_Rotherham_WEB.pdf
186. https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/3433/html/
187. https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/CfMM-GB-News-Report-2024.pdf - page 7.
188. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/685559d05225e4ed0bf3ce54/National_Audit_on_Group-based_Child_Sexual_Exploitation_and_Abuse.pdf - page 6.

corrections and looking at complaints."[189]

One further technique of CfMM is to single out individual journalists who write regularly about Islamism or Muslims and attack them personally, whether or not it is justified. The aim is to deter them from writing more, or to make their bosses or other journalists suspicious of them.

CfMM repeatedly targeted the late Andrew Norfolk of *The Times*, who did more than any other reporter to expose the Rotherham grooming scandal, winning the Orwell Prize, the Paul Foot Award and Journalist of the Year 2014 at the British Journalism Awards for his work. In 2019 CfMM accused Norfolk of "scapegoating" Muslims and of "Islamophobia" for writing other investigative stories,[190] including about al-Rayan, a bank accused of providing services to a banned terror group. CfMM director Rizwana Hamid said: "We are accustomed to Andrew Norfolk's scapegoating of Muslims and Muslim civil society." The stories have not been withdrawn and remain available on *The Times*' website.[191]

For one of this series, CfMM claimed that *The Times* had been "forced to apologise and pay compensation and legal costs… after an article by Andrew Norfolk."[192] The error was not Norfolk's – as the correction explained, his article had accurately represented the position - but was in the placement of a picture by a sub-editor. One technique of CfMM's is to blame targeted journalists for the errors of others (one of the authors has also experienced this, being attacked by Versi for an error in a multi-byline story made by one of the other reporters).

A similar pattern emerged in CfMM's treatment of GB News journalist Charlie Peters, who has led the station's coverage of grooming gangs, including the reporting which led to the setting up of the Casey review. In a thread on X, CfMM singled Peters out and labelled him an "activist journalist".[193] This was in response to his GB News documentary 'Grooming Gangs: Britain's Shame',[194] which criticised institutional failures and political denial around group-based CSE. As with Andrew Norfolk, the risk is that this response appears not to engage with the substance of the reports, but instead to attack the reporter.

Attacking other accurate journalism about wrongdoing involving Muslims

The MCB's 2022 annual report says CfMM's main analyst, Faisal Hanif, "conducted a major piece of investigative work on the so-called Trojan Horse Affair which has been falsely described as an attempt to 'Islamise' schools in Birmingham."[195] The MCB has also repeatedly attacked this story; its then Secretary-General Zara Mohammed falsely claimed that the Trojan Horse plot was a "hoax"[196] and has attacked journalists for exposing dishonest attempts to deny it.[197]

A letter purporting to reveal the plot was a hoax, but the plot itself was real. As three separate official inquiries and four official agencies found, hardline Muslims mounted a co-ordinated takeover of state schools, bullying secular head teachers from their jobs. "Un-Islamic" subjects

189. https://youtu.be/qZvGbmanPig?si=1J-gaNGVGoAKZNHCS&t=4749
190. https://morningstaronline.co.uk/article/media-watchdog-accuses-times-%E2%80%98scapegoating%E2%80%99-muslims
191. https://www.thetimes.com/article/7b117966-b6fb-11e9-bfc4-f5ff1f47234e
192. https://x.com/cfmmuk/status/1285887523890376704
193. https://x.com/cfmmuk/status/1707393261801791786
194. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VAGk-2mvgBEk
195. https://mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/MCB-Annual-Report-2021-2022-Web.pdf
196. https://x.com/MuslimCouncil/status/1491752473194868740
197. https://mcb.org.uk/mcb-letter-to-the-observer-on-the-trojan-horse-affair-podcast/

such as biology and sex education were restricted or removed from the curriculum. The plotters employed their own relatives, ranted in school assemblies against the West, Christians and white people, and made girls sit at the back of the class.[198] The plot's ringleader, Tahir Alam, was banned from any involvement with schools and lost a court action against the ban.[199]

CfMM also fails to declare the MCB's interest in the affair: Alam was chair of its education committee and co-authored the MCB guidance recommending that girls be veiled in school.[200] (To declare our own interest, one of the authors of the report you are now reading wrote many of the Trojan Horse stories. No complaint about his stories was ever upheld, and none was even received from Alam or the MCB; CfMM did not exist then.)

Another example of CfMM's readiness to attack the media for truthfully reporting unacceptable behaviour by Muslims came in the wake of the 2018 protests that were organised by activists outside some Birmingham primary schools, against their supposed promotion of homosexuality in class. Up to several hundred demonstrators, many unconnected to the schools, turned up at the gates, often daily, for months, abusing pupils and teachers. The High Court banned the protests, saying they were "intimidating" and "frightening" and that the demonstrators "misrepresented, sometimes grossly misrepresented" what was being taught.[201] A (Muslim) former senior prosecutor, Nazir Afzal, brought in to mediate, said the protests were "false", "malicious" and "disgraceful", with "outside forces" at work.[202]

CfMM, however, used news coverage of the demonstrations as a case study of the media's "Islamophobia", saying the reporting was "demonising Muslims" and "using well-known tropes". It devoted 18 pages of its report on the British media and Islam to defending the demonstrators, falsely claiming they were merely "parents" protesting against "what they perceived as the LGBT indoctrination of their children".

It attacked the "clear bias" of journalists in accepting the teachers' "claims of intimidation… in good faith". As stated above, the fact of intimidation was found by a court. CfMM also attacked broadcasters for interviewing the government's counter-extremism commissioner, Sara Khan, on the subject, saying she was a "controversial figure". It accused the media of leaving out key details while itself leaving out salient details such as Afzal's comment and the fact and content of the High Court judgment.[203]

198. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7ef246ed915d74e33f36c1/HC_576_accessible_-.pdf and https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7d8b8440f0b65084e75d74/Review_of_Park_View_Educational_Trust.pdf

199. https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/midlands-news/ex-governor-alleged-trojan-horse-14002965 ; see also https://policyexchange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/The-Trojan-Horse-Affair.pdf for a full account of the plot and subsequent attempts to rewrite history.

200. https://image.guardian.co.uk/sys-files/Education/documents/2007/02/20/Schoolinfoguidance.pdf

201. http://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWHC/QB/2019/3217.html

202. https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/midlands-news/cowardly-government-blamed-breakdown-anderton-16351301

203. https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/CfMM-Annual-Report-2018-2020-digital.pdf - pages 202-18, 233-4.

Chapter 5: CfMM, Islamism, Terrorism and Extremism

Islamist extremism is overwhelmingly the greatest terror threat to Britain, responsible for 94 per cent of terrorist deaths since 1999 and 88 per cent of injuries.[204] As of 2023, 80 per cent of police counter-terror work, and 75 per cent of MI5's, was Islamist-related.[205] Islamism is not always violent, but even non-violent Islamism can be a significant threat to democratic values and social cohesion.

CfMM's stance on Islamism is perhaps the most worrying aspect of its work. As noted in Chapter 3, it has repeatedly criticised accurate reporting about Islamism, and about terror attacks by Islamists. As part of a strongly Islamist-influenced organisation, the MCB, CfMM also seeks to sanitise the term Islamism, to downplay its threat to security, to hint that other threats are as bad or worse, to discourage its accurate use by the media and to sow confusion about what it is. Versi has called Islamist extremism "a label that is deployed indiscriminately by right wing ideologues to smear mainstream Muslims who have no truck with terrorists, but don't play by the right's playbook."[206] CfMM attacks journalists – on almost no evidence, as we shall see – for supposedly conflating Islamism and Islam, while itself at times attempting to make exactly the same conflation.

What follows needs to be seen in the context of Versi's statement in 2018 of his ambition to change the very words that the media are able to use. As he put it: "At one point, everyone used the phrase 'Muslim terrorist', and now they use 'Islamist terrorist', which is still not great, but it's better than 'Islamic'. How did that happen? Because an understanding developed that it was the wrong term to use. So I think it'll happen [further change in terminology]. I think history tells us we can make it happen."[207]

CfMM's definition of Islamism

Islam and Islamism are not the same. One is a faith. The other is a revolutionary political movement which seeks to replace secular democratic government with, at best, an authoritarian religious government (such as Turkey's), at worst a religious dictatorship. As one of Islamism's intellectual founding fathers, Sayid Abul A'la Maududi, himself said: "Merely believing in God as God and in His law as the true law is not enough. As soon as you believe in these two things, a sacred duty devolves upon you: wherever you are, in whichever country you live, you must strive to change the wrong basis of government, and seize all powers to rule and make laws from those who do not fear God."[208]

204. See Appendix 3.

205. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66473eddf34f9b5a56adc9e3/E03131940_HC_775_Lord_Walney_Review_Accessible.pdf - page 39

206. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/aug/03/rishi-sunak-prevent-strategy-conservative-leadership - writing in "a personal capacity."

207. https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/oct/18/miqdaad-versi-very-polite-fight-against-british-media-islamophobia

208. https://ia600703.us.archive.org/12/items/MawdudiLetUsBeMuslims/Mawdudi_Let_Us_Be_Muslims.pdf - page 290

Though Maududi said in this passage that all Muslims have a duty to be Islamists, the vast majority in Britain are not, making clear in repeated polls their support for the UK's non-religious democracy where those who "do not fear God" have the same political rights as everyone else.

CfMM, too, has a definition of Islamism. As it puts it, "an example of a neutral understanding of the term may be a 'peaceful democratic, constitutional, and moderate political activism based on Muslim ideology'."[209] It claims that there is a "lack of a consensus on its meaning and usage", meaning the term has been used, among other things, as "a synonym for Islam".[210]

This definition is not "neutral". Islamism is not always peaceful; it is not moderate on the full spectrum of Muslim opinion (though there are obviously more moderate and more radical tendencies within Islamism); it is seldom democratic (even if some Islamist parties have fought and won power through democratic elections); and its goals are not consistent with Britain's constitutional order. Nor, as we will see, does CfMM present any serious evidence that the mainstream media uses Islamism as a synonym for Islam.

As noted in chapter 3, the Hanif report of 2021 attempted to discredit the word Islamism, labelling it "redundant" and claiming that the media tended to use it as an "all encapsulating" and "catch all term" in a "scattergun" and "broad-brush" fashion. The report further claimed the word was "applied in many articles with abandon to everyone ranging from Daesh terrorists to democratically elected leaders, peaceful protesters and Muslim scholars."[211]

CfMM states of the term Islamism/Islamist that "we would recommend the avoidance of the term as a descriptor altogether."[212] It also says that "we request journalists not to use 'Islamic extremism' in news output as it is not a neutral term, but one that makes a direct link between Islam the religion and the ideology of extremism….The term *Muslim extremist* is also problematic as although this does not demonise the entire religion of Islam, instead laying blame at the door of an individual, it implies that the Muslimness of the individual is relevant."[213] (Which it often is, of course).

According to the MCB, the term "Islamist" is an example of "terminology used within the press" that "may not reflect" the values of accuracy which journalists should uphold.[214] CfMM has listed "Islamic terrorism", "Islamist", "Islamic State" and "jihadi" as "problematic terms" which may contribute to "misinformation".[215]

CfMM's Hanif report in 2021 argued that the media regularly conflates Islamism with Islam. It claims that "the terms 'Islamist', 'Islamism' and 'Islamic' are often used interchangeably and inaccurately in the media," claiming that "one feature of media usage of the term Islamist is a broad-brush approach where any, and all entities, are labelled as Islamist whether they are groups or individuals, irrespective of who they are or the context in which they operate."[216]

However, the report gives only one example – a local paper in Colchester – which in 2019 described an Islamic centre as an "Islamist centre" in a

209. https://cfmm.org.uk/term/islamism/
210. ibid
211. https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/CfMM-Annual-Report-2018-2020-digital.pdf - pages 82, 84, 171
212. https://cfmm.org.uk/term/islamism/
213. https://cfmm.org.uk/term/islamic-extremism/
214. https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Briefing-for-IPSO-Reporting-on-Islam-and-Muslims-in-UK-press.pdf
215. https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/3433/html/
216. https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/CfMM-Annual-Report-2018-2020-digital.pdf - page 82

headline. CfMM claims that "it is unclear why the term Islamist is used here".[217] It is not unclear – the paper admitted it was a "human error caused by the journalist, who was very upset with the mistake," and corrected it the next day.[218] Even this single instance, therefore, in fact showed the opposite of what CfMM had claimed; the newspaper manifestly *did* recognise the distinction between Islam and Islamism.

CfMM says moderate Muslims may be liberals, not devout or government spies

On a related note, CfMM also argues that "the terms 'moderate Muslim' or 'moderate Islam' should be avoided in [news] output," claiming this is "a political determination which forces Muslims living [sic.] the West to pick a side between their religious and political identities, and to conform with the version of Islam that has been sanctioned by the state." It further claims that "other criticisms of the term that have surfaced in recent years" include that the term "moderate Muslim" implies "a lack of devoutness", "an acceptance of liberal values", "a commitment to secularism" or "someone who is willing to help surveil Muslim communities".[219] Again, there is an irony here: CfMM as noted above was happy to see the word 'moderate' deployed as a descriptor of Islamism; but not, it would appear, in relation to non-Islamist Muslims.

Other tendentious definitions

A "terminology" section on CfMM's website contains several strikingly tendentious definitions of terms associated with Islam, along with recommendations for journalists about how to use them (or, as we have seen, not to use them at all).

The entry for the Islamist movement, the Muslim Brotherhood, says that the rulers of Egypt, where it first emerged, were "startled by [its] expanse and impact on all of Egyptian society through a narrative which addressed the needs and responsibilities of all classes and all sections, of religious and spiritual, as well as social and political…. Many modern Muslim movements and organisations around the world may find inspiration in the teachings of [Brotherhood founder] Hassan al-Banna, especially with its emphasis on the directive of moderation, peace, coexistence and social reform."[220]

The entry instructs journalists that "Muslim Brotherhood should not be conflated with extremism or terrorism."[221] For a more nuanced view of the Brotherhood, including its willingness to "countenance violence including, from time to time, terrorism" and how it has "deliberately, wittingly and openly incubated and sustained" a terrorist organisation, Hamas, see the UK government review by the former ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Sir John Jenkins.[222]

CfMM's entry for "jihad" states: "Terror attacks cannot and should not be described as unqualified acts of 'jihad' given they breach the rules of 'jihad'. Journalists who use the term 'jihad' to refer to the actions of

217. ibid
218. https://www.ipso.co.uk/rulings/09551-19/
219. https://cfmm.org.uk/term/moderate-islam/
220. https://cfmm.org.uk/term/muslim-brotherhood/ , including "Origin" tab at bottom.
221. ibid
222. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a8076bfe5274a2e8ab504ab/53163_Muslim_Brotherhood_Review_-_PRINT.pdf

terrorist groups are giving these groups the legitimacy that they have been denied by the majority of Muslims. It would be possible to say that a terrorist has claimed he is engaging in jihad in line with the principles of Islam, but that this claim has no standing amongst ordinary Muslims."[223]

In Chapter 1 we described the MCB's record of hostility towards Ahmadis, a Muslim minority persecuted by hardliners and attacked by the MCB as "Qadiyani", an insult, and as "not Muslim".[224] CfMM's glossary entry for "Ahmadiyya" (the name of the sect) does note the Oxford English Dictionary definition which describes the group as Muslim, but CfMM then states: "Journalists should not be defining who is or is not Muslim… most mainstream Shia and Sunni scholars do not consider Ahmadis to be Muslim… Regardless of the above, Ahmadis define themselves to be Muslim."[225]

CfMM also makes an offensive comparison between the Ahmadis and Neturei Karta, a tiny sect of ultra-orthodox Jews who have called for the destruction of Israel and attended a Holocaust denial conference in Iran.[226]

Islamist Terrorism

The question of how terrorism is portrayed is one that has animated CfMM throughout its work. As noted above, it has criticised even accurate, factual wire service accounts of Islamist terror attacks from the likes of the Associated Press as "offending", and claims that they show the media's "Islamophobia". We showed that under CfMM's scoring system for bias, no story about an Islamist terror attack can ever be classed as unbiased unless it avoids all mention of the culprit's motivation – which would, of course, make for less accurate reportage than now.

CfMM appears to question whether any terrorist can, by definition, be a Muslim or whether any Muslim can, by definition, be a terrorist. The very act of committing terrorism, it appears to say, places someone outside the invariably and universally peaceful religion of Islam. It describes Islamist terrorists as "so-called Muslims"[227] and the terror group Islamic State as "judged by Muslim scholars to be outside of Islam".[228] Its 2021 report on how the British media covers terrorism refers to "so-called 'Islamist' extremists", "so-called 'Islamist' terror", and the "so-called 'Islamist' threat".[229]

CfMM has criticised how the word "Islamist" is applied to, among others, Hamas, al-Shabaab (the Somali offshoot of al-Qaeda), and Boko Haram (the Nigerian terror group). It claimed that this was an "arbitrary use of the term 'Islamist'… in relation to conflict and terrorism".[230] Miqdaad Versi, CfMM's founder and "lead strategist", has described Islamist terrorists not as Islamists or terrorists but as "hateful criminals who align to the Islamic State death cult".[231]

223. https://cfmm.org.uk/term/jihad/
224. https://web.archive.org/web/20031020205859/http://www.mcb.org.uk/presstext.php?ann_id=52
225. https://cfmm.org.uk/term/ahmadiyya/ (including "More" tab at bottom.)
226. ibid
227. https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/CfMM-Annual-Report-2018-2020-digital.pdf - page 19
228. Ibid, page 71
229. https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/CfMM-How-British-Media-Reports-Terrorism-ONLINE.pdf
230. https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/CfMM-Annual-Report-2018-2020-digital.pdf - page 86
231. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/aug/03/rishi-sunak-prevent-strategy-conservative-leadership

CfMM has complained about a newspaper calling an Isis executioner a "terrorist"

CfMM's unsuccessful complaints to news organisations include at least one defending a terrorist. It complained that a *Mail on Sunday* article calling the British Isis executioner Mohammed Emwazi (Jihadi John), a terrorist (among 19 terrorists associated with a London mosque) was "misleading" because he was never convicted.[232] The newspaper stands by this description.[233]

Separately, CfMM defended an imam at a mosque attended by the Manchester Arena bomber who was accused by the BBC of preaching a sermon calling for armed jihad.[234] The BBC stands by the story.[235]

In relation to the same attack, CfMM described as "misleading" a BBC headline that the Manchester Arena suicide bomber was "seen praying" shortly before triggering his device. It was subsequently changed.[236] The headline was not misleading – witnesses said they had seen the terrorist praying.[237] Praying in an incongruous context (in this case, at a pop concert) is a recognised "pre-incident indicator" of a suicide attack,[238] and demanding that this kind of detail not be reported might put the public at greater risk by discouraging them from acting on suspicious behaviour in future. One security guard at the event told the public inquiry into the attack that he had not acted on his suspicions of the terrorist because he had been afraid of being branded a racist.[239]

On another occasion, CfMM attacked the BBC for describing the Westminster terror attacker, Khalid Masood – an Islamic extremist known to the security services – as an "Islamic extremist", claiming this was "anti-Muslim language". It said that "it can be argued that linking the word 'Islamic' with extremism is an oxymoron as the word 'Islam' comes from the Arabic root word 'Salam', meaning 'peace'."[240]

After an Islamist terrorist murdered the MP Sir David Amess, Versi criticised several newspapers for saying that police were investigating the possibility that it was an Islamist attack without mentioning that there were other possibilities.[241] In a tweet at 10.30pm on the day of the murder, Versi claimed that the police were also investigating other potential motives. In fact, the killer told people at the scene moments after the murder (at around noon) that he had done it for Amess's vote on bombing Syria,[242] which several newspapers knew within hours; told police that it was a terror attack on his reception at the police station;[243] and police publicly declared it a terror attack about 90 minutes after Versi's tweet.[244]

CfMM's director, Rizwana Hamid, was asked in 2021 what she would do if there was reason to be concerned about someone's views. She answered: "I really think as an individual or as an organisation I'd have two different responses to that. But the question is not what you do with those people. Because you're looking at the end result. And, if you're asking me, if you can clearly see that somebody's going to do something, do you inform [on] them to the police or whatever? But that requires a level of trust from the community to work with the government and the

232. https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/CfMM-Quarterly-Report.pdf - page 16
233. https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-6425829/Duchesss-mosque-linked-19-terrorists.html
234. https://cfmm.org.uk/bbc-news-wrongly-imply-imam-called-for-armed-jihad/
235. https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-44729727
236. https://x.com/cfmmuk/status/1303228658040156161
237. https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/oct/15/manchester-arena-bomber-was-spotted-by-security-staff-inquiry-hears
238. https://rusi.org/publication/countering-suicide-bombing-part-iii
239. https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2020/10/27/scared-branded-racist-security-guard-feared-confronting-manchester/
240. https://cfmm.org.uk/analysis-of-description-of-the-westminster-attacker-as-islamic-extremist-by-salman-al-azmi/
241. https://x.com/miqdaad/status/1449125744739823621
242. https://www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/R-v-Ali-sentencing-remarks-130422.pdf
243. ibid
244. https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-58932139

police, and I don't think there is that level of trust to do that."[245]

Far-Right Terrorism

For all CfMM's attempts to dissociate terrorism from Islam, it seems far more comfortable in connecting it to the far-right.

Versi, "writing in a personal capacity", suggested in August 2022 that far-right terrorism was the greatest terror threat to the UK and a greater threat than Islamist terrorism, saying that "in recent years it appears that 'the most severe threats to the country's national security feature people planning atrocities linked to extreme rightwing ideology'."[246] He quoted from a newspaper report purporting to state the contents of a "top secret grid in MI5's London headquarters".

Versi did not mention the report also said that there were six times more active Islamist counter-terror investigations than far-right ones. [247] MI5's most recent annual threat update at that point (July 2021) said that Islamist terrorism was its "largest operational mission" and that far-right terrorism accounted for only "one in five" of its GB investigations.[248] This was published online for anyone, including Versi, to read.

By the same token, MI5's threat update for 2022, given in November, said that Islamist terrorism was "about three-quarters of our terrorist caseload",[249] as it remains to this day.[250] Versi also claimed that Prevent disproportionately targeted Muslims, linking to long out-of-date figures.[251] The actual figures at the time of his article showed that 22% of Prevent referrals were Islamist against 46% far-right.[252]

CfMM may argue that the referral share for Islamism was still disproportionate to Muslims' share of the UK population (6%), but the test here is of course proportionality to the terror threat, not population. On this test the problem with Prevent was exactly the opposite to what Versi claimed: that disproportionately few Islamist cases were referred to it.

As noted above, Islamist terrorism has caused 94 per cent of terrorist deaths in Great Britain since 1999.[253] As of 2023, 10 per cent of the counter-terrorism police caseload concerned far-right terror, while 80 per cent concerned Islamist terror.[254] The majority, usually the vast majority, of attacks, foiled plots, subjects of interest, MI5 warrants, MI5 investigations and terrorist prisoners are Islamist.[255]

In 2020, CfMM issued a "groundbreaking report" into "how the British media reports terrorism", claiming that far-right terrorism was underreported and that there was a "disproportionate focus on Muslims". It said that "words identifying Muslims or Islam are more frequently placed alongside 'terror', 'terrorist', 'terrorism' or 'terrorist(s)' in comparison with the most frequent identifiers of 'far-right' or 'white-supremacist' terrorism"; and that "between 2015-2019, over half of the terms 'terrorist', 'terrorism' or 'terror' were used with the terms 'Islam' or 'Muslim'. This is almost nine times more than with the terms 'far-right', 'neo-Nazi' or 'white supremacist'."[256]

There is a very obvious reason for this. Since the first major far-right terror attack in 1999, Islamist terrorists have killed 16 times more people

245. https://youtu.be/N6xTH5Nxe0I?si=O8DX-8jPgCnu03rOm&t=2505
246. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/aug/03/rishi-sunak-prevent-strategy-conservative-leadership
247. https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/may/16/terrorism-in-the-uk-the-rising-threat-of-far-right-extremists
248. https://www.mi5.gov.uk/news/director-general-ken-mccallum-gives-annual-threat-update-2021
249. https://www.mi5.gov.uk/news/director-general-ken-mccallum-gives-annual-threat-update
250. https://www.mi5.gov.uk/director-general-ken-mccallum-gives-latest-threat-update
251. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/aug/03/rishi-sunak-prevent-strategy-conservative-leadership
252. https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/individuals-referred-to-and-supported-through-the-prevent-programme-april-2020-to-march-2021/individuals-referred-to-and-supported-through-the-prevent-programme-england-and-wales-april-2020-to-march-2021
253. See Appendix 3.
254. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66473eddf34f9b5a56adc9e3/E03131940_HC_775_Lord_Walney_Review_Accessible.pdf - page 39
255. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66473eddf34f9b5a56adc9e3/E03131940_HC_775_Lord_Walney_Review_Accessible.pdf - see charts on page 39.
256. https://cfmm.org.uk/cfmm-special-report-how-british-media-reports-terrorism/

in Britain than far-right terrorists, and injured over 40 times more.[257] Over the last eight years, Islamists have killed 42 times more people, and injured 27 times more.[258]

Again, therefore, the figures for actual numbers of attacks (although over a slightly different time period) suggest that the disproportionality problem is the opposite of what CfMM says it is. The Home Secretary, Yvette Cooper, shares this position, stating in December: "Islamist terrorism remains the primary threat… Concerns over low numbers of referrals [to Prevent] for Islamist extremism have still not been addressed."[259]

Other views

In March 2021, a teacher at Batley Grammar School delivered a lesson on free speech and blasphemy, which included showing a caricature of the Prophet Muhammad. Soon after, demonstrators, many with no connection to the school, gathered outside the school's gates. The teacher's name, address and picture were published online and he received death threats, forcing him into hiding, where four years later he remains.

CfMM's Faisal Hanif strongly defended the demonstrators, saying they had been "derided as zealots and extremists for protesting against schoolteachers subjecting their children to racist caricatures in the name of 'free speech'…it was clear that the media was the real mob outside the school gates."[260] Hanif claimed that a report had "vindicated" the protestors (it actually said the teacher had not intended to cause offence, and his suspension was lifted);[261] and that a "nexus of Labour politicians and media demonisation of Muslim communities has continued in Batley and Spen."[262] In a later article, Hanif said that the fate of the Batley teacher was a "favourite obsession… regularly wheeled out" as part of a "feast of Islamophobia served regularly across the British media."[263]

Hanif's colleague, Amanda Morris, another member of CfMM's core team, worked previously for the Islamist activist group MEND as its National Head of Women's Engagement and Chair of MEND's Cardiff working group.[264] MEND was named by the then Communities Secretary, Michael Gove, as one of three Islamist groups being investigated for extremism. The Shawcross review of Prevent found that MEND "has a well-established track record of working alongside extremists and campaigning against Prevent", the strand of the Government's counterterrorism strategy that aims to stop people becoming involved in terrorism.[265] In opposition, Labour said it would not work with MEND.[266]

In July 2023, it was reported that Morris had promoted the phrase "#FromTheRiverToTheSea", used by the proscribed terrorist group Hamas to call for the elimination of Israel.[267] A spokesperson for the Campaign Against Antisemitism said:

> *Promoting anti-Semitic phrases like 'From the River to the Sea', which calls for the destruction of Israel; urging the media to give a platform to spokespeople from Hamas, an anti-Semitic genocidal terrorist group banned by the UK, are all red flags.*[268]

257. See Appendix 3.
258. See Appendix 3. The Walney review states 46 times more. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66473eddf34f-9b5a56adc9e3/E03131940_HC_775_Lord_Walney_Review_Accessible.pdf
259. https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2024-12-17/hcws327
260. https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/labour-islamophobia-party-for-all-became-none
261. https://web.archive.org/web/20210527122819/https:/batleymat.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/ExecutiveSummaryoftheIndependentInvestigationat-BGS26052021.pdf
262. https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/labour-islamophobia-party-for-all-became-none
263. https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/far-right-riots-uk-media-racial-hatred-veneer-legitimate-patriotism
264. https://mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/MCB-Our-Shared-Future-online.pdf
265. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/63e26968d3bf7f17385a3421/Independent_Review_of_Prevent.pdf - p121
266. https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2024/04/01/labour-cuts-ties-with-muslim-organisation-named-as-islamist/
267. https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/07/18/amanda-morris-stop-funding-hate-accused-antisemitism/
268. *Ibid.*

Chapter 6: CfMM as Pro-Palestinian Advocate

Though CfMM claims its remit is to address bad reporting about Muslims in Britain, three of its last six reports – and two of its last three – have been about Israel- Palestine. Its view of what constitutes good reporting on this subject is strikingly partisan, criticising the media for not being more hostile to Israel and repeatedly urging that it not treat Hamas as a terrorist organisation.

Response to the 7/10 Hamas attacks on Israel

CfMM's (and the MCB's) first reaction to the 7 October 2023 attacks came at 1.03pm UK time on the day, 3.03pm in Israel. By then, it was already clear that hundreds of Israeli civilians had been murdered or abducted.

CfMM, however, chose to tweet a screenshot from the Middle East Eye website which called the massacre a "surprise assault" and a "response to Al-Aqsa mosque raids", as well as Israeli ultranationalists entering Jerusalem's al-Aqsa mosque the week before (incidents in which no-one, let alone hundreds, had died). CfMM commented: "A headline that gives some context. Pro-Israel media in the West should take heed, context matters."[269]

Israel responded to the attacks with an aerial bombardment of Gaza and sent in ground troops, after Prime Minister Netanyahu pledged to destroy Hamas. The Hamas-run Gaza Ministry of Health has said that as a result of this action, tens of thousands have been killed and injured. Israeli and U.S. officials have alleged that the ministry exaggerates civilian casualties and asserted that many of the dead are Hamas terrorists.[270]

269. https://x.com/cfmmuk/status/1710626972974362822

270. https://thehill.com/homenews/administration/4275738-biden-no-confidence-in-palestinian-death-toll-from-gaza-health-ministry/

Since the 7 October attacks, and Israel's retaliatory efforts to destroy Hamas in Gaza, CfMM has published a steady stream of tweets on X (formerly Twitter). From 7 October until the end of 2023, CfMM posted more tweets than in the rest of the year combined (see table below).

CfMM Activity on the X (Formerly Twitter) Platform 2023					
Dates	*No of Days*	*No of Posts*	*No of Reposts*	*Total*	*Average No of Posts per day*
1 Jan – 6 Oct 2023	279	73	11	84	0.3
7 Oct – 31 Dec 2023	86	204	0	204	2.4

Based on the average number of posts per day, since the 7 October attacks CfMM posted on X more than nine times than it had in the preceding ten months.

Attacks on BBC coverage of Israel-Palestine

In June 2025, CfMM published a report, *One Story, Double Standards*, attacking the BBC's coverage of the war as one-sided. A number of luminaries endorsed the report, including Husam Zomlot, the head of the Palestinian mission to the UK, the ex-Tory peer Sayeeda Warsi, the columnist Owen Jones and the former spin-doctor, Alastair Campbell.[271]

The BBC's director of news content, Richard Burgess, spoke at a meeting in Parliament, alongside two Labour MPs, to launch the report attacking the broadcaster's coverage of Israel-Gaza. According to CfMM, Burgess praised the report as "thorough".[272] If true, this seems a generous interpretation of the report.

CfMM's usual difficulties with numbers (see chapters 2 and 3) were strongly in evidence. Among the report's complaints are that "the BBC ran an almost equal number of articles profiling personal and humanising stories about specific Israeli or Palestinian victims (279 for Palestinians vs. 201 for Israelis)."[273] Even if CfMM's figures are accurate, 279 is not "almost equal" to 201 – it is nearly 40 per cent more. The reference to "articles" is puzzling, since only one BBC outlet, the website, publishes articles. Did CfMM's figures analyse any broadcast output from what is, after all, a broadcaster?

Another BBC failing, the report said, was that "sympathetic articles with emotive, humanising or personal stories of Palestinians appeared only twice as often as those for Israelis" and that "BBC article headlines mentioned Palestinian casualties just two times more than Israeli casualties." Coverage of a war, the report appeared to argue, should be driven entirely by the relative numbers of dead – ignoring all the other aspects driving it, such as for instance, the hostage issue; the military strategy of the two sides; and the fact that the dead in the first days, when coverage was at its most

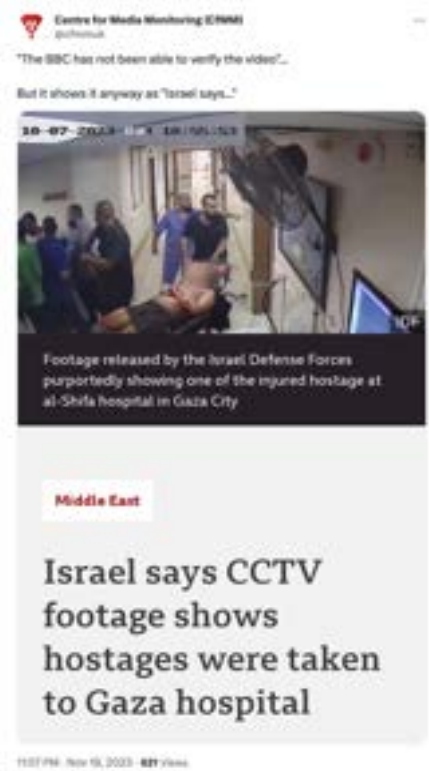
271. https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/CfMM-report-2023-24-ePDF-Edited.pdf
272. https://x.com/cfmmuk/status/1935039302020260346
273. https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/CfMM-report-2023-24-ePDF-Edited.pdf - page 9

intense, were overwhelmingly Israeli. The report also complained that the use of the word "massacre" and "atrocities" were exclusively used to describe Israeli deaths. Again, if true, this clearly refers to the killings in cold blood of large numbers of Israeli civilians at the beginning of the current round of hostilities.

The report complained that "the BBC attached the 'Hamas-run' qualifier (i.e., 'Hamas-run health ministry') to Palestinian casualty figures in 1,155 articles – almost as many times as the Palestinian death toll was mentioned across BBC articles – thereby undermining Gazan casualties and Palestinian suffering, more generally." It is not clear how telling the truth about the source of the figures "undermines Palestinian suffering". Rather, it is essential information enabling BBC viewers and listeners to evaluate the numbers.

The report complained that the BBC failed to use loaded and disputed terms, such as "apartheid", to describe the "reality" of Israeli policy. It attacked BBC interviewers for challenging the term "genocide", in effect demanding that it be allowed to pass without challenge.

On numerous previous occasions since 7 October 2023, CfMM has criticised news organisations for reporting Israeli statements on developments in the conflict and for "lapping up without question" what Israeli official sources claim.[274] On 31 October 2023, CfMM complained that "'Israel says' is the starting point for much of the UK media."[275] And on 19 November 2023, when the BBC reported that Israel had released a video – in the BBC's words – "purportedly showing one of the injured hostage[s]" entering al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza City, CfMM complained that the BBC had showed the video "as 'Israel says'." This was despite the BBC's caveat that it could not verify the video:[276]



274. https://twitter.com/cfmmuk/status/1724184348105072687
275. https://twitter.com/cfmmuk/status/1719436078707343374
276. https://twitter.com/cfmmuk/status/1726389166479471046

Several days earlier CfMM re-tweeted a complaint about a BBC article which documented Israeli claims about Hamas's use of al-Shifa Hospital as a base. BBC journalists had been shown inside the hospital by the Israeli Defence Force (IDF), but even though the article was careful not to present the IDF's statements about the hospital as true, CfMM commented: "More Israel says... at @BBCNews":[277]

It is hard not to conclude that CfMM simply believes that media organisations should not present the Israeli perspective in this conflict. It seems it cannot distinguish – and does not believe the public can distinguish – between reporting an Israeli claim or statement and presenting such a statement as fact.

Another CfMM tweet from 12 November 2023 exemplified this failure to appreciate the difference between the news being that the IDF has made certain statements and the news being the content of these statements. On that occasion, CfMM was irked by the BBC giving the IDF a chance to make statements about Hamas allegedly preventing its delivery of fuel to al-Shifa Hospital. But the BBC news was not, contrary to CfMM's claim, "coming straight out of the IDF press office". The news was, rather, that the IDF had made a series of claims:[278]

277. https://twitter.com/cfmmuk/status/1725199429769043996
278. https://twitter.com/cfmmuk/status/1723793432106131923

The implication in all this is that, in the view of CfMM, media organisations should not report what official Israeli spokespeople or sources say at all. This suggests that CfMM is rather less interested in achieving genuinely "balanced" and objective media reporting, than in making sure that the view from one particular side is given greater airing than the other. Furthermore, CfMM's numerous social media postings on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the few months after 7 October 2023 – which far exceed its postings throughout the whole of 2023 – give it the semblance of a political advocacy group focused on Palestine, rather than a grassroots organisation seeking to address anti-Muslim bias in the British media.

"Media Reporting on Palestine"

In May 2021, in response to an upsurge in violence, CfMM published a report titled 'Media Reporting on Palestine'.[279] It sought to provide what CfMM viewed as a corrective to the mainstream media's allegedly biased coverage of events occurring at that time. It also sought to highlight the media "narratives" allegedly "skewing public perception of the issue"; to provide instructions for the public to complain to media outlets about their coverage; and to make recommendations to media outlets for more balanced reporting.

In this report, CfMM identified 9 key "narratives" that it presented as being biased in Israel's favour or against the Palestinians. These involved, in its own words:[280]

1. Justifying the actions of the Israeli police/military/settler groups by presenting them as legally valid;
2. Equalising the two sides through vocabulary that implies a power symmetry;
3. Removing the actor from the narrative through the use of passive sentence structures or alternative identifier;

279. https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/MediaReportingOnPalestine-Report-and-Toolkit-Final.pdf

280. *Ibid.*, p.3.

4. Skew[ing] focus on Palestine as the aggressor, with Israel acting in 'self defence', or framing Israeli military action as a 'retaliation';
5. Referring to 'Palestinian militants' or 'Palestinian Islamist militants', which essentialises all Palestinians as violent aggressors;
6. Using religious terminology and imagery to frame the violence as religiously motivated or justified;
7. Remov[ing] Palestine/Palestinian as an identifier;
8. Presenting criticism of Israel, criticism of Zionism, or support for Palestine as being inherently antisemitic; and
9. [Giving] undue prominence or insufficient challenge to views in broadcast interviews.

The reader was invited to accept CfMM's claims about the prevalence of these "biases" at face value. None of the examples provided by CfMM are properly cited for the reader to cross-reference. Screenshots of the articles' titles are included, so the persistent reader may try to google them, but no links are provided. This makes it difficult for the reader to verify CfMM's claims about the media's reporting on Palestine, as, once again, CfMM fails to explain fully how it arrived at its conclusions.

Perhaps more importantly, the examples that CfMM does provide, in almost all cases, do not actually exemplify the allegedly skewed "narratives" they are held to represent. To give but one example: the first "narrative" it identifies is "Justifying the actions of the Israeli police/military/settler groups by presenting them as legally valid." According to CfMM, the media is biased by "portraying Israeli violence as justified because it is in response to Hamas aggressions". An example of this alleged bias is an article in *The Guardian* with the headline "Israel launches airstrikes on Gaza Strip after Hamas rocket attacks."[281] CfMM did not dispute the fact that this correctly describes the sequence of events. But it complained that this "ignores the preceding weeks of violence in Jerusalem and the West Bank which saw Israeli police raiding the Al Aqsa Mosque and injuring hundreds of Palestinians who were protesting about being forcibly removed from their homes." However, the article did not – explicitly or tacitly – "justify" or provide "legal validity" for Israel's airstrikes in Gaza. The article, did however, explicitly reference what CfMM claimed it had ignored. It stated: "militant groups in Gaza fired rockets into Israel and Israel responded with strikes on the Palestinian coastal territory *following a police raid on the al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem that left hundreds injured.*" CfMM seems to have claimed "bias" in this case since the article did not explain the violence, including Hamas's decision to fire rockets into Israel, solely as a result of Israel's actions. But is this a fair-minded analysis? How much 'context' can a daily newspaper be expected to include? And in any case, all of this is to ignore the fact that the decision over what context is relevant to any given story is, ultimately, only ever a subjective decision.

The above criticism of *the Guardian* is closely related to the fourth of CfMM's "narratives", by which the media allegedly provides "a skewed focus on Palestine as the aggressor", wrongly casting Israel's military

281. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/10/hamas-fires-rockets-into-israel-in-dispute-over-jerusalem-mosque

actions as "self defence" or "retaliation". This "narrative", the CfMM report alleges, is further exemplified by another *Guardian* article from 10 May 2021, which carried the headline, "Jerusalem seethes as the rockets begin on day of rising tension."[282] But nothing in the headline or the article portrays Palestinians as "the aggressor" and Israel as merely responding to Palestinian violence. Again, it is difficult to see why CfMM find this article problematic. It explicitly refers to a complex series of events leading to Hamas firing rockets into Israel, including Hamas's warning that it would attack if Israeli police did not leave the compound of al-Aqsa Mosque.

CfMM's sixth "narrative" is also worth considering. CfMM claims that the media uses – but should avoid using – "religious terminology and imagery to frame the violence as religiously motivated or justified". Yet, one of the key participants here is Hamas – the Islamic Resistance Movement. The examples it provides – articles that focus on or mention al-Aqsa mosque, which was undeniably the site of violent clashes in May 2021 – allegedly link Islam, "by extension", to violence. Such reasoning seems, at best, highly tendentious. The reality is that none of these examples make any connection, explicitly or tacitly, between violence occurring at the site of al-Aqsa – or violence *per se* – and Islam.

CfMM's eighth "narrative" is that the media is guilty of presenting criticism of Israel or Zionism, or support for Palestine, as being "inherently" antisemitic. But no mainstream media outlet – let alone "the media" – presents criticism of Israel or Zionism, or support for Palestine, as inherently (i.e. intrinsically or unavoidably) antisemitic. That does not mean, however, that some criticism of Israel or Zionism – or support for Palestine – cannot possibly be antisemitic. It can be. And news articles or op-eds that point that out are correct to do so. But nothing CfMM has published demonstrates a general bias in the British media that conflates criticism of Israel or Zionism with antisemitism. Attempting to exemplify the existence of this "narrative", CfMM asserts: "Celebrities who support Palestine and call out Israeli aggressions and illegal actions are labelled 'anti-Semitic'." It then provides a screenshot of an article about Palestinian (and Israeli) celebrities becoming involved in the politics of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The article headline indicates that Bella Hadid, an American of Palestinian origin, was "accused" of antisemitic social media posts. The article itself, however, did not label her as antisemitic. Again here, CfMM seems unable to distinguish between a news article *reporting* on someone being accused of antisemitism and a news article *accusing* someone of antisemitism. The alleged example again turns out not to be what CfMM claimed.

According to CfMM, "journalists must avoid labelling valid criticism of the actions of the state of Israel and its agencies as being on par with hatred of Jewish people or the Jewish faith." But what constitutes a "valid" or "invalid" criticism and who is to decide on that? And what if criticism of Israel is actually accompanied by antisemitism?

CfMM further states: "Media outlets must not use the smear of anti-Semitism to shut down the voices of Palestinians and their supporters."

282. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/10/jerusalem-seethes-as-the-rockets-begin-on-day-of-rising-tension

Again, what constitutes a "smear" and who is to decide on that? And what if pro-Palestinian activists do actually express antisemitic views?

Interestingly, an example CfMM provided of supposedly "balanced coverage" was an article in *The Guardian* which carried the headline: "Rep. Ilhan Omar accuses Israel of 'terrorism' after country launches air attacks in Gaza and AOC blasts police actions in Jerusalem."[283] Here, for CfMM, "balance" is about providing a point of view that it agrees with – in this case, of two high profile American politicians, both Democrats, criticising Israel without any countervailing point of view. The double standard effectively in operation here is deeply instructive.

For similar reasons, it is useful to examine the recommendations offered by CfMM's report on Palestine, as to how the media should cover the conflict. These recommendations include:[284]

1. Avoid referring to Palestinians as "militants", or using the term "Palestinian militants", instead refer to the specific military body, e.g. Al-Qassam, Al-Jihad al-Islami, and use the term "combatant".
2. Avoid the term "militant" or "Islamist" when referring to democratically elected political parties.
3. Differentiate between Hamas the political party, and their military wing, the Al-Qassam Brigade, especially when using the terms "militant" or "terrorist", as per UN definitions.

Thus, according to CfMM, Hamas's military wing, the Qassam Brigades, and Islamic Jihad – terrorist groups that were already proscribed in Britain at the time of CfMM's report – should not be referred to as "militants" but only by their names or as "combatants".

By the same token, and as highlighted earlier, why should the media not refer to Hamas as an Islamist group – regardless of its 2006 electoral victory? Even putting aside the fact that no elections had been held in Gaza for 15 years at the time of the report, cannot it be both "Islamist" and "democratically elected"?

2024 report: 'Media Bias: Gaza 2023-24'

In March 2024, CfMM published 'Media Bias: Gaza 2023-24'.[285] This report alleges a systemic pro-Israel bias in the mainstream media's reporting of the Gaza war, claiming that the coverage lacks context, falsely balances disproportionate events, and demonises the Palestinians. The report further alleges that the media has collectively failed to provide sufficient historical context about the root causes of the conflict, the blockade of Gaza, and Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories. It criticises the tendency in news media articles to frame Palestinian militant groups as aggressors who have "sparked" or "provoked" conflicts, while apparently portraying Israeli airstrikes and ground operations as "retaliations" or "responses". The report argues that media coverage has consistently underplayed and underreported Palestinian casualties, especially civilian deaths, compared to Israeli casualties. It also claims that news outlets have relied heavily

283. Hamid and Morris, 'Media Reporting on Palestine, Special Report & Toolkit', May 2021, p.37.

284. *Ibid*., pp.22, 41.

285. https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/CfMM-Report-Final-MEDIA-BIAS-GAZA-2023-24-ePDF.pdf

on Israeli military sources while failing to provide an adequate voice to Palestinian perspectives or human rights groups.

Writing the foreword to CfMM's report, journalist and author Peter Oborne lauds the document as "compulsory reading". Oborne accuses journalists and broadcasters of deliberately misleading their readers and viewers about the Israel-Palestine conflict:

> *The authors prove beyond question that British journalists and broadcasters have used every trick in the book to paint a false story of the war. They've twisted the facts, promoted falsehoods, collaborated with fabrications, lied by omission, and far too often failed to correct their mistakes.*[286]

However, Oborne's serious allegations of intentional deception by British journalists and broadcasters do not appear to be supported by any credible evidence contained within CfMM's report. Moreover, there are again fundamental problems with the methodology. The evidential base for CfMM's claims about pervasive anti-Palestinian and anti-Muslim bias within the media includes quotes from articles and reports in mainstream media outlets (like the BBC, CNN, the NYT) which use allegedly biased language; data on the frequency with which terms like "militant" and "terrorist" were allegedly applied in a different way to Israelis and Palestinians; and statistical comparisons of the allegedly skewed coverage of Israeli versus Palestinian perspectives and casualty figures.

Even where individual incidents of bias are identified, no evidence is presented to justify the larger claim that these are part of a systemic or general bias in the media. And in many cases, the individual examples do not in fact show what CfMM claims they do.

For example, CfMM criticises an opinion piece written by a Muslim journalist, Moataz Khalil, in which he described his concerns about antisemitism and "the atmosphere of incitement in London since October 7", and his views about Islamic rules of warfare.[287] But, as in other areas, CfMM does not appear to understand that the purpose of an opinion piece is to express a point of view; its publication does not substantiate claims of fact-twisting, bias or intentional deception.

Additionally, differences in the frequency of terms, like "militant" and "terrorist", allegedly applied differently to Israelis and Palestinians, do not necessarily imply bias or Islamophobia. It is an uncontestable fact that Hamas, which started the current phase of this conflict with its surprise terror attacks on 7 October 2023, is a designated terrorist organisation and intentionally targeted civilians, as it has done before. It should therefore be no surprise that in the weeks following the 7 October attacks the terms "terrorist" and "militant" were applied asymmetrically in the media to the Palestinians – more specifically to Hamas – than to the Israeli state.

The CfMM report makes numerous recommendations which could be viewed as a call for journalists and editors to align themselves with CfMM's particular political stance on the Israel-Palestinian conflict.

One such recommendation, for example, states: "The Palestine-Israel conflict should not be framed as a religious, jihadist or Muslim v Jewish

286. 'Media Bias: Gaza 2023-2024', CfMM, 6 March 2024, p.17.

287. https://www.express.co.uk/comment/expresscomment/1829831/Palestine-demonstration-anti-Jewish-hate-march-Hamas-killing-jews

conflict at the expense of legitimate Palestinian demands for a State." The problem with this demand – consistent with CfMM's stance in other reports as noted previously – is that it conflicts with the views of some of the main actors in the conflict. The names of two of the most important Palestinian groups – Hamas (acronym of the Islamic Resistance Movement), and Palestinian Islamic Jihad – indicate quite clearly that they view their *raison d'être* and conflict with Israel through a religious lens. Hamas's 1988 Charter is replete with scriptural references that are far from incidental to its guiding principles and goals. Even its 2017 document, claimed by some observers as evidence of a moderation of Hamas's views, frames Palestine as a religious cause – as nothing less than "the central cause" of the global Muslim *umma* – and describes *jihad* as a duty, a right and an honour.

Another demand from CfMM is that pro-Palestinian protestors "should not be framed as extremist and anti-British or anti-Western" for "advocating for the Palestinians".[288] CfMM refers to a small number of reports about some protestors it claims have been unfairly characterised as supporting Hamas, expressing antisemitism or advocating violence. But CfMM seems to think -- wrongly -- that all these reports generalise about pro-Palestinian activists and that these reports, with their allegedly biased coverage, characterise the media as a whole. CfMM fails to provide any grounds for such a view. It provides a handful of examples where the media has supposedly unfairly tried to link pro-Palestine protestors with support for Hamas, antisemitism or violence – but these in no way can be thought to represent the entire mediascape in Britain. Moreover, it seems undeniable that some protesters have expressed support for Hamas, chanted for *jihad*, or shouted antisemitic slogans.[289] Surely, CfMM cannot insist on a blanket rule that pro-Palestinian protestors "should not be framed as extremist and anti-British or anti-Western" for "advocating for the Palestinians" when some protestors have indeed "advocated" for the Palestinians by expressing antisemitic tropes or support for Hamas?

On 21 May 2024, Michael Gove, the then Minister for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, gave a speech on antisemitism in Britain following the 7 October attacks. He warned of the "the increasingly strident, visible and lurid, demonstrations of antisemitism on our streets during protest marches", at which "Swastikas, Hamas banners, [and] depictions of Jews as exploiters, devils, child killers, pigs" have been seen.[290] He added: "Now, of course, I know that many of those on these marches are compassionate people - driven by a desire for peace and an end to suffering. But they are side by side with those who are promoting hate."

Lord Walney, who produced a report titled 'Protecting our Democracy from Coercion' on the same day as Gove's speech, on 21 May 2024, also recognised that a minority of those at pro-Palestinian protests have expressed support for Hamas. He wrote:

> *These protests featured incidents of gross public antisemitism, aggressive and*

288. 'Media Bias: Gaza 2023-2024', CfMM, 6 March 2024, pp.139, 143.

289. https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/oct/27/police-seek-people-pro-hamas-signs-palestine-demo-london

290. https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/secretary-of-states-speech-on-anti-semitism

> *intimidating chanting, and suspected instances of support for a proscribed terrorist organisation (namely Hamas), an offence under the Terrorism Act 2000. The marches were accompanied by celebration of Hamas, often euphemistically called the "Palestinian resistance", both online and in sermons in several mosques across the UK, and by a disturbing rise in antisemitism.*[291]

"From the River to the Sea"

The meaning of the phrase "From the river to the sea" has been the subject of much fierce dispute – particularly since the 7/10 attacks and the public rallies in British cities where the phrase has been chanted or displayed on placards by protesters. CfMM has disputed that this chant is a call for the destruction of Israel, as the then Home Secretary, Suella Braverman, had said.

Miqdaad Versi, CfMM "lead strategist" and the MCB's spokesman, gave his view: "The chant doesn't mean what the Home Secretary says. And it's not disingenuous to say so. I have heard many meanings from people I know, who have used that phrase, eg (1) the historic land of Palestine will be free from occupation, discrimination and bigotry in a two-state solution, (2) there should be a secular state with one person, one vote, where everyone is free."[292]

On X the director of British Future, Sunder Katwala, gently rebuked Versi, saying: "I think it would be enormously better to eschew and discourage [the chant's] use in Britain. I think destroy Israel is an entirely natural (good faith) interpretation. Knowing that is how many hear it should be given weight in my view. Chanting 'Free Palestine' could avoid this." Versi dismissed this, replying: "Your call is for the language of the occupied, being changed for the occupier due to an unnatural interpretation."[293]

What Versi calls an "unnatural interpretation" also appears, as stated, to be shared by Hamas itself, however. The terror group's 2017 declaration states that "the establishment of 'Israel' is entirely illegal… Hamas rejects any alternative to the full and complete liberation of Palestine, from the river to the sea."[294] Here it is worth noting that the establishment of Israel was recognised by the United Nations in 1949 and by the UK in 1950.

Versi seemed not to see the flaw in his own logic. How can one claim that the phrase has "many meanings", but also insist that none of those meanings could possibly include the destruction of Israel (which might seem to follow from a literal reading of the words)?

Nevertheless, CfMM's March 2024 report, 'Media Bias: Gaza 2023-24', repeats Versi's complaint that the phrase "from the river to the sea" has been misrepresented as a "'call for genocide of the Jews' and or the 'annihilation of Israel'".[295]

291. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66473eddf34f9b5a56adc9e3/E03131940_HC_775_Lord_Walney_Review_Accessible.pdf
292. https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/10/16/suella-braverman-rows-anti-israel-chant/
293. https://x.com/sundersays/status/1714728999878799541
294. https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/hamas-2017-document-full
295. https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/CfMM-Report-Final-MEDIA-BIAS-GAZA-2023-24-ePDF.pdf

Chapter 7: Real World Effects?

How far is CfMM already succeeding in the effects we allege that it seeks? Is it managing to suppress accurate stories? Is it chilling journalism about Islam? Is it leading the media to a more conservative view of what constitutes normative Islam?

CfMM has had at least a dozen of the British media's most senior figures attend or speak at its events or provide endorsements for some of its worst, most questionable research. In addition, it maintains that it has had significant influence on the training of both journalists and journalism students, as well as on actual policy at media organisations.

In this chapter, we explore these and other claims to consider how much impact CfMM is having in the real world. We find that some of its assertions are exaggerated, but that there is a kernel of truth to them. More troublingly, several prominent journalists do seem to have taken CfMM at face value without doing much, if any, journalistic due diligence of their own on it.

CfMM and the BBC

Given its status as the national, taxpayer-funded broadcaster, the extent to which CfMM has gained a purchase within the BBC is of particular concern.

In June 2025, the BBC's director of news content, Richard Burgess, spoke at a meeting in Parliament, alongside two Labour MPs, to launch a CfMM report attacking the broadcaster's coverage of Israel-Gaza. This complained that the BBC calls the Gaza Ministry of Health, source of Palestinian casualty figures, "Hamas-run" (which it is) and claimed that "sympathetic articles [sic.] with emotive, humanising or personal stories of Palestinians appeared only twice as often as those for Israelis".[296] According to CfMM, Burgess praised the report as "thorough". [297] The former Today presenter, Mishal Husain, said "some of the examples in [the report] deserve to be looked at closely and carefully".[298] The podcaster and former spin-doctor, Alastair Campbell, contributed a supportive quote endorsing CfMM's analysis.[299] For our analysis of the CfMM report, see Chapter 6 above.

On 6 November 2019, CfMM director Rizwana Hamid met the BBC's specialist factual commissioning editors - Abigail Priddle and Daisy Scalchi – to discuss the media's coverage of Muslims and Islam and how they can improve their programming to better reflect and "normalise" Muslims as British citizens.[300] In January 2020, Rizwana Hamid met BBC Commissioning Editor Daisy Scalchi,[301] to discuss "religious illiteracy in

296. https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/CfMM-report-2023-24-ePDF-Edited.pdf
297. https://x.com/cfmmuk/status/1935039302020260346
298. https://x.com/MishalHusain/status/1934635204972617855
299. https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/CfMM-report-2023-24-ePDF-Edited.pdf
300. https://mailchi.mp/mcb/mcb-newsletter-october-464737
301. https://www.linkedin.com/in/daisy-scalchi-14171b18/

the media as well as Muslim contributors and talent for their religious and documentary programming".[302] (CfMM's views on what constitutes "religious illiteracy" are discussed in Chapter 4.)

In July 2021, CfMM announced that it "organised a focus group for the BBC on their coverage of Muslims and Islam. Muslim community organisations and individuals who have done CfMM's 'How to Monitor the Media' workshops fed back their views to the heads of Radio & TV Religious Programming, the Head of Creative Diversity as well as other editors, commissioning editors and programme makers."[303] Participants provided feedback on numerous programmes, including 'Being Muslim', 'Meet the Khans', and 'Islam, Belfast & Me'. It was described as "the first of many feedback sessions CfMM will be organising with the BBC".

A December 2022 report said CfMM had agreed to "provide training to journalists at the BBC and other outlets" and that "the BBC hopes to repeat this exercise annually".[304]

In March 2023, Hamid met with the BBC for journalist training.[305] The MCB's 2023 annual review adds that "CfMM Director Rizwana Hamid recently held high-level meetings with the BBC's new Director of Diversity & Inclusion, Chinny Okolidoh, and the D&I lead for News, Hajira Mahommed, to discuss representation, training, and recruitment."[306]

Again, it is worth noting too that two senior CfMM officials formerly worked for the BBC: CfMM director Rizwana Hamid worked in multiple BBC roles[307] during 1988-2017;[308] and its media monitoring analyst Faisal Hanif was a BBC researcher.[309]

Wider influence with senior journalists

The MCB states that CfMM has "engaged with over 1000 journalists, editors, regulators and policymakers".[310] Its 2022 annual review boasted that at CfMM, "stakeholder engagement continues at pace, with Rizwana [Hamid, CfMM's director] meeting many high-ranking editors and managers at broadcasters such as the BBC, ITN, STV, and publishers such as News UK."[311]

Two senior media executives – Gary Jones, then editor of the *Daily Express*, and Paul Clarkson, then managing editor of *The Sun* – spoke at CfMM's 2019 parliamentary launch. Also in attendance were the managing editor of *the Daily Mail*, Alex Bannister, and his then counterpart on the *Mail on Sunday*, John Wellington.[312] (The managing editor is not the editor, but is a senior member of the team, and usually deals with editorial complaints and personnel matters.) One journalist interviewed by Policy Exchange said that Wellington, who retired in 2020, held regular lunches with Versi.

At the 2019 event, Gary Jones, who has since been replaced, "acknowledged the presence of Islamophobia in the press", according to the MCB, and "praised the Centre for Media Monitoring for its report as a way of holding media to account. 'We need to be monitored,' he said, whilst also noting that the Muslim Council of Britain was the first group he met with, after becoming Editor-in-Chief."[313]

In 2021 two editors, Alison Phillips, then of *The Mirror*, and Emma

302. https://mailchi.mp/mcb/january-2020-update
303. https://mailchi.mp/mcb/monthly-update-july-2021
304. https://mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/AGMreport_28.01.21_2.02.pdf
305. https://us10.campaign-archive.com/?u=4efd81e7012b9e8ff1197ab2c&id=fdfc525b9d
306. https://mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/AGM-Mid-Term-Report-2024.pdf p. 12
307. https://cfmm.org.uk/team-rizwana-hamid/
308. https://www.linkedin.com/in/rizwana-hamid-169557146/.
309. https://cfmm.org.uk/team-faisal-hanif/. This URL appears to be inactive but is archived at: https://web.archive.org/web/20210412152704/https://cfmm.org.uk/team-faisal-hanif/.
310. https://mcb.org.uk/initiatives/media-monitoring/
311. https://mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/AGMreport_28.01.21_2.02.pdf
312. https://mcb.org.uk/launch-of-the-centre-for-media-monitoring/
313. ibid

Tucker, then of *The Sunday Times*, now editor of the *Wall Street Journal*, wrote forewords for one of CfMM's most problematic reports, Faisal Hanif's *The British Media's Coverage of Muslims and Islam 2018-20*, whose copious flaws are described in Chapter 3 above. "This report by the Centre for Media Monitoring shows how much we as journalists must question ourselves and the work we are producing in relation to reporting of Muslims and Islam," claimed Phillips. "I welcome this report - in the full knowledge that it contains criticisms of the press, my own paper included. Some of those criticisms are valid. Some I would respectfully disagree with. All, though, are useful," wrote Tucker.[314] Phillips, Tucker, Mark Easton, the BBC's home affairs editor, Nesrine Malik, a *Guardian* columnist, and Inzamam Rashid, Sky's then north of England correspondent, spoke at the launch of the report, though Easton questioned aspects of CfMM's argument.[315]

In 2020 Jones, Phillips, Pete Clifton, then editor-in-chief at the Press Association news agency, Toby Castle, deputy news editor of the BBC, Diane Ridley, managing editor of ITV News and Roohi Hasan of ITN took part in a CfMM "meet the media" workshop where they were questioned by CfMM's director, Rizwana Hamid.[316]

The MCB website also includes praise for CfMM from other journalists. Sky's then defence and security correspondent, now Middle East correspondent, Alistair Bunkall, said that "organisations like CfMM provide a really useful service not only to the Muslim community but to the media in this country." ITV News' security editor, Rohit Kachroo, described CfMM's research as "solid and credible". Jon Snow, the then Channel 4 News anchor, said its media Islamophobia report was "incredibly important. We need to read and inwardly digest it and be very wary of how we as journalists behave."[317]

From these statements, it does not appear that many of these journalists had subjected CfMM's work to journalistic scrutiny. Moreover, these endorsements appear to have helped elevate CfMM into a position of trusted provider of training and diversity training within several media organisations.

The MCB's 2022 annual report said CfMM had "delivered 'conscious journalism' training to editors and journalists at the *Standard*, *The Independent*, and Scottish TV" and was due to deliver it to Reach, which owns hundreds of regional newspapers as well as the *Mirror*, the *Express* and the *Star*. Discussions, it said, were "ongoing with diversity and inclusion leads as well as with editors at the BBC, News UK (*The Times*, *The Sun*, *The Sunday Times*), C4, ITN, Sky, LBC, STV, *The Guardian*, *The Mail*, The Bureau for Investigative Journalism, & The Peoples' Newsroom."[318]

CfMM and policymakers

The MCB's 2022 report said CfMM had been "invited to deliver media skills training for external training providers Act Now to deliver training to civil servants, NGOs and private individuals."[319]

Miqdaad Versi also appears to have built links with the governing

314. https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/CfMM-Annual-Report-2018-2020-digital.pdf
315. https://mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/AGMreport_28.01.21_2.02.pdf
316. https://cfmm.org.uk/meet-the-media-2020/
317. https://mcb.org.uk/initiatives/media-monitoring/
318. https://mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/MCB-Annual-Report-2021-2022-Web.pdf
319. https://mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/AGMreport_28.01.21_2.02.pdf

Labour Party. He was pictured at the Labour Muslim Network's 2025 iftar dinner in March 2025.[320]

The impact of CfMM on working journalists

Working journalists spoken to by Policy Exchange report different reactions of their employers to CfMM. Some already appear to have come to the same conclusions as us about it. In the words of one national newspaper executive: "Everyone has long since got their measure… we continue refusing to give Miqdaad Versi an inch." Others say it impinges on them little and they barely know it exists.

But at other outlets, journalists tell us that CfMM is taken more seriously and has managed to influence stories. One said that they suspected CfMM of applying a deliberately attritional approach to achieve this end – with the organisation's staff lodging countless, often trivial, complaints (sometimes as part of a coordinated campaign). Each complaint required a response internally and externally – all of which soaked up the time of journalists. As referenced earlier, CfMM has stated that newspapers should be "flooded" with complaints because it "costs them, in effect, money, because they have to pay their staff for every hour that they are looking at corrections and looking at complaints."[321]

A useful analogy here might be that of footballers surrounding the referee to protest any and every decision he gave against them; as the retired official Mark Clattenburg recently observed, this was less about trying to change any particular decision and more about trying to influence the next one, making the referee less inclined go against them in the future.[322]

More concretely, it is clear that the pressure being levelled by groups like CfMM is making some media organisations more risk averse when it comes to certain stories. One national newspaper reporter said he believed a fear of accusations of "Islamophobia" was a factor in the refusal of his newspaper to publish two accurate stories raising clear questions of public interest – one involving a mosque and a senior politician, the other a well-known Muslim activist. This same newspaper has, to be fair, published many other stories about wrongdoing involving Muslim figures and institutions.

Another reporter said CfMM had told his newspaper that it was writing too many stories which used the words "Muslims" and "Islam". He was, he said, discouraged from writing some stories about Muslims as a result. A further reporter who has written about Islamism said he feared how CfMM and other activists would be able to use any official definition of "Islamophobia" to suppress his reporting. The same journalist also told us he was furious to see that one of his group's editors had written a preface for a CfMM report, presumably without close scrutiny of its deeply problematic contents.

320. https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1190626535995303 – 0'48".
321. https://youtu.be/qZvGbmanPig?si=1JgaNG-VGoAKZNHCS&t=4749
322. https://talksport.com/football/3050965/mark-clattenburg-premier-league-alex-ferguson-jurgen-klopp-referee/

CfMM and Ipso

Several journalists told us they were worried about the relationship between CfMM and the press self-regulatory body, Ipso – another organisation with perhaps too trusting a view of Versi and his team. Although the clear majority of complaints made by Versi, the MCB and CfMM have been unsuccessful, even an unsuccessful Ipso case is time-consuming.

One particularly revealing episode came in late 2016, when Versi complained to Ipso about a Daily Express story on the extent to which Muslim-majority countries had joined the coalition against ISIS (notably, a subject of no direct consequence to Muslims resident in the UK). According to IPSO, the terms of Versi's complaint stated:

> *that Clause 1(iii) of the [Editor's Code of Practice] had been breached because the publication had not offered him a right to reply. He [Versi] said that he should have the right to reply in relation to all inaccurate reporting of Muslims or Islam, not least because of his personal work pursuing complaints on such matters, as well as his role as Assistant Secretary General at the Muslim Council of Britain [emphasis added].*[323]

Sir Alan Moses, the founding chairman of Ipso (who stood down in 2018), told MPs that he spoke to Versi "a great deal" and praised his "very important and valuable work" on the portrayal of Muslims in the media.[324] Versi was appointed to an Ipso committee to consider new guidance on the reporting of Muslims and Islam,[325] in which CfMM claims to have been "instrumental".[326] This may actually be true. Many parts of the guidance[327] closely reflect CfMM's preoccupations in its reports and submissions to Ipso.

The draft guidance – toned down for the final published version after a previous report by Policy Exchange – did so even more, saying that "insensitivities [in reporting] can damage communities…[and] contribute to members of communities feeling divorced from, or misunderstood by, the media." It also said that "engaging with community organisations" was a "vital part of seeking input and reflecting the perspectives of readers" when writing about Islam.[328] It is not hard to imagine which "community organisations" this meant – though, as we showed in chapter 1, the idea that the MCB "reflects the perspectives" of all Muslim readers is fallacious.

It is to the credit of Ipso that it opted not to publish the guidance in its original form. Even so, problems remain. Ipso still recommends the MCB on a webpage for "resources aimed at journalists".[329] And Islam is the only religion for which Ipso produces guidance for journalists.[330] As several journalists have pointed out – both at the time and since – there is nothing in Ipso's own regulations which demands that it produce such guidelines.

323. https://www.ipso.co.uk/rulings-and-resolution-statements/ruling/?id=13416-16
324. http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/home-affairs-committee/hate-crime-and-its-violent-consequences/oral/78630.html
325. https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/CfMM-Submission-to-IMPRESS-Standards-Code-Review-March-2021.pdf
326. https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/CfMM-Submission-to-Editors-Code-2023.pdf
327. https://www.ipso.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/islam-guidance-2020.pdf
328. https://policyexchange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Eroding-the-free-press.pdf
329. https://www.ipso.co.uk/external-resources/
330. https://www.ipso.co.uk/resources-guidance/resources-and-guidance-for-journalists-and-editors/

CfMM and other attempts to bring pressure on newspapers

In recent years, the interest of the MCB and CfMM in using Ipso as a vehicle with which to patrol the boundaries of media commentary on Islam seems to have cooled. As noted, the group's last appearance in Ipso's rulings database – for an unsuccessful complaint – was in September 2023. Several of the journalists to whom we spoke noted that today, groups like CfMM now preferred to utilise more informal mechanisms – often lacking in the same level of transparency. This might involve a direct approach to a journalist, part testing their readiness to stand firm, part simply intelligence gathering about the nature of the media organisation in question. Another approach was to direct complaints towards corporate affairs officers who might be less inclined to contest allegations of media malpractice and instead seek the path of least resistance (retraction, correction etc).

Yet a further avenue was to target advertisers through targeted campaigns. Here, it is worth noting that CfMM shares at least one staffer – Amanda Morris – with another group that operates by such methods to achieve similar objectives, Stop Funding Hate (SFH).[331] This organisation pressurises advertisers to boycott outlets which it deems to "spread hate and divison",[332] by which it seems to mean outlets of the political right or centre-right, from GB News to *The Times*. SFH has not been particularly successful. But in 2017 a few big-name advertisers did withdraw from one of its targets, the *Daily Mail*, and the campaign claimed to have "helped bring about a big drop in anti-migrant front pages" in the newspaper.[333] (The appointment of a new, more liberal editor, Geordie Greig, himself since replaced, is likely to have had much more to do with this.) News outlets have now, however, become more robust in the face of the campaign's pressure tactics; Stop Funding Hate has complained since that the *Mail* is "getting worse again".[334]

Influence in Universities

The MCB states that CfMM has "delivered masterclasses to students of journalism at all the top universities".[335] Documented CfMM sessions include some at Middlesex,[336] City,[337] Leeds Trinity[338] and Goldsmith's, University of London.[339] The MCB's 2022 annual review said it had "secured agreements from over 60 universities" to include CfMM's masterclasses in their journalism courses.[340] The MCB quoted one student as saying that the CfMM "masterclass" had **"**brought into perspective the extent to which Muslims are misrepresented in the media but also equipped me going forward to know how not to fall into the trap of perpetuating false narratives."[341]

However, Freedom of Information requests to UK universities have revealed significant difficulties with CfMM's claims – perhaps even false narratives. The requests were sent in early 2024 to 143 universities, including all listed in the Complete University Guide as offering undergraduate journalism courses.[342] Almost 90 per cent, 127

331. https://hrantdink.org/attachments/article/3719/Biographies.pdf
332. https://stopfundinghate.info/
333. https://stopfundinghate.info/2022/12/12/the-daily-mail-is-getting-worse-again-can-you-chip-in-to-help-keep-up-the-pressure/
334. ibid
335. https://mcb.org.uk/initiatives/media-monitoring/
336. MCB, Monthly Briefing - Issue 66, February 2020, https://mailchi.mp/mcb/february-2020-update-464801.
337. MCB, Monthly Briefing - Issue 80, April-May 2021, https://mailchi.mp/mcb/april-may-2021-updates.
338. https://twitter.com/jenkean/status/1579496154089201664
339. MCB, Monthly Briefing - Issue 85, December 2021, https://mailchi.mp/mcb/mcbupdatesdecember2021-465402.
340. https://mcusercontent.com/4efd81e7012b9e8ff1197ab2c/files/bc9d4a3681e1-e750-8337-ce6f4c7045b5/MCB_Annual_Report_2021_2022_Web.pdf
341. https://mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/AGMreport_28.01.21_2.02.pdf
342. 'Results for Undergraduate Journalism Courses', *The Complete University Guide*, https://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/courses/search/undergraduate/journalism.

establishments, responded. Of the 16 non-respondents, only three are known to provide journalism courses.

Only 20 universities of the entire 127 which responded said there had been any official contact (in person or online) between CfMM and their students. Even this was often not classes but one-off guest lectures or presentations, not part of their own teaching or syllabus.

When examining the specific claim that CfMM had "delivered masterclasses at all the top universities", only five of the top 10 for journalism and nine of the top 20[343] said that CfMM had delivered any contact (in person or online) to its journalism students. Again, even these were often not classes, part of the university's teaching or syllabus, but one-off guest lectures or presentations. Only two of the overall top 20 universities[344] reported any face-to-face contact between students and CfMM.

Several institutions at which CfMM specifically claimed to have delivered masterclasses said that it had not done so. It is possible that CfMM may have had informal contact with students at some of the universities through student unions, student societies and so on.

CfMM and a definition of "Islamophobia"

CfMM, like the MCB, campaigns strongly for the government to adopt the legally-binding definition of "Islamophobia" suggested by the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on British Muslims in 2018.[345] Many people of good faith may not realise that there is a significant difference between anti-Muslim hatred/anti-Muslim discrimination (which all should oppose, but which are already illegal) and the concept of "Islamophobia" promoted by activist groups such as CfMM.

The latter is much broader than the former. As the APPG states, an official "Islamophobia" definition should be used to control and police activity "far beyond" anything that can currently "be captured as criminal".[346] Adopting its definition, the APPG argues, would set "appropriate limits to free speech" when talking about Muslims,[347] and create "tests… for ascertaining whether contentious speech is indeed reasonable criticism or Islamophobia masquerading as 'legitimate criticism'."[348]

The APPG makes clear that permitted criticism of Islam must be narrowly circumscribed, because the "supposed right to criticise Islam results in nothing more than another subtle form of anti-Muslim racism".[349] Evidently, this is a view with which key staff members of CfMM would sympathise. Amanda Morris, for instance, has stated: "We can't start to make laws based on Islamophobia being a crime until we have an official definition."[350] Moreover, this report has listed multiple examples of how the term "Islamophobia" has been used by CfMM to attack journalists for saying things which are true. For further examples of how the term is abused, see our recent publication on the subject.[351]

It is not hard to predict the likely impact on the media landscape of the government adopting a definition of Islamophobia. The prospect for such an outcome has only grown with the appointment of Dominic Grieve

343. https://www.theguardian.com/education/ng-interactive/2023/sep/09/best-uk-universities-for-journalism-league-table
344. As stated in the *The Complete University Guide* and TES rankings.
345. https://cfmm.org.uk/term/islamophobia/
346. https://static1.squarespace.com/static/599c3d2febbd1a90cffdd8a9/t/5bfd1ea3352f531a6170ceee/1543315109493/Islamophobia+Defined.pdf - page 32.
347. Ibid, page 11.
348. Ibid, page 36.
349. Ibid, page 35.
350. https://youtu.be/qZvGbmanPig?si=XVtqYnmCwOO1vh7Q&t=3670
351. https://policyexchange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/A-definition-of-Islamophobia.pdf

to chair a new working group on the Anti-Muslim Hatred/Islamophobia Definition;[352] Grieve earlier wrote an approving foreword to the APPG report.

The implementation of an Islamophobia definition will surely provide a major boost to the work of CfMM and the MCB. One of the journalists to whom we spoke anticipated that one of the effects of such a definition, whether legally binding or otherwise, would be de facto to create a new regulatory environment – one in which the kind of pressure wielded by activists like Versi would be multiplied several times over.

Versi complained to Ipso this year about a newspaper article which said an Islamophobia definition could become legally binding, saying "there was no justification for the article's claim that the APPG definition of Islamophobia, even if it were adopted, would become law." Versi said that the article he complained about "conflated the adoption of a legally non-binding definition with the adoption of a new law".[353] The complaint was unsuccessful. The APPG report specifically and repeatedly called for the definition to be "legally binding".[354]

352. https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/working-group-on-anti-muslim-hatredislamophobia-definition

353. https://www.ipso.co.uk/rulings/00088-25/

354. https://static1.squarespace.com/static/599c3d2febbd1a90cffdd8a9/t/5bfd1ea3352f531a6170ceee/1543315109493/Islamophobia+Defined.pdf – for instance, on pp27, 30, 32, 35.

Conclusion and recommendations

CfMM *has* highlighted examples of inaccurate and unfair stories about Muslims in the mainstream media – if not very many, and even fewer recently. However, it has often attacked stories which are both accurate and fair, but which do not suit its and the MCB's political agenda. It has promoted, and achieved some traction for, a series of claims about the British media which it simply does not substantiate.

Because its own work fails to separate factual reportage from comment, CfMM also fails to recognise that distinction in the media. Where news outlets report the words of third parties, CfMM judges them to endorse those words. Where media organisations publish opinion pieces, whose very purpose is to express a point of view, CfMM attacks them for "bias".

Alongside this, CfMM has regularly appeared to insist that criticism of a religio-political ideology (Islamism) necessarily entails criticism of a religion (Islam) and its people (Muslims). CfMM thus diagnoses mainstream British media as widely hostile towards Muslims – and, with a neat circularity, offers its services to the media to prevent further such failings in future.

It is a tactic that some in and around the media appear to have fallen for. Editors and journalism academics are anxious to be seen as serious about combatting prejudice against Muslims (something which in itself disproves the idea that they are irredeemably Islamophobic). But engaging with CfMM is the wrong way to tackle it. It is not a good-faith body.

CfMM positions itself as the authoritative arbiter of how Muslims should be represented within the media. It markets itself as a source grounded in objectively framed research into anti-Muslim bias and Islamophobia. But it is neither of these things. As this report has shown, CfMM's research is flawed and appears driven by partisan, activist concerns.

CfMM, it may be argued, has helped create a dependency loop. Accusations of Islamophobia and anti-Muslim bias are used to create an environment in which news media organisations feel compelled to do something to combat such prejudice. But by turning to CfMM, such organisations and teachers not only learn about genuine examples of anti-Muslim bias and defamation, they also consume (and risk reproducing) highly contestable claims about what constitutes normative Islam and how it should be reported.

Such politically motivated efforts to control the language surrounding Islam – and, more importantly, Islamism – risk blinding sections of the

media both to alternative Muslim points of view *and* to the realities of Islamist extremism.

Against this, some comfort can be taken from the words of the former editor of *The Sunday Times*, Emma Tucker, who, despite being quoted in the CfMM report as welcoming it and its criticisms, stated during its launch that the paper's coverage of Islam will be held to highly critical scrutiny from those *across* the political spectrum. She also highlighted the importance of being independent. "It is really important to listen and engage," she said, "but we are not going to be beholden to any sector of society if we are truly going to do our jobs well".[355] Let us hope that she and other editors stick to that pledge.

On the basis of the preceding analysis of CfMM and its work, we conclude by offering four important recommendations for editors and journalists:

1. **Avoid reliance on self-appointed arbiters of Islamic authenticity to shape how Islam and Islamism is reported.** Editors and journalists should be aware that normative Islamic beliefs and practices are contested between Muslims and that adopting the editorial view that certain beliefs and practices are genuinely Islamic, while others are not, is neither appropriate nor necessary. It is not the responsibility of editors or journalists to arbitrate the Islamic faith, nor to adopt uncritically the "guidance" emerging from self-professed Muslim authorities.
2. **Resist the pressure from activist groups such as CfMM to self-censor the language used to describe Islamist extremists or terrorists**. Recognise that the term "Islamist" does not only or even predominantly mean that the individual or group in question is violent, and that it covers a diverse range of viewpoints and attitudes, including those that relate to sharia, jihad, and the notion of an Islamic state. Editors and journalists should exercise their right to report facts and opinions regarding Islamist and other extremists or terrorists, including proscribed groups, without worrying about CfMM monitoring their work and describing it as "Islamophobic".
3. **Avoid media "awareness" training provided by organisations, such as CfMM, professing to speak for Muslims or Islam, or claiming to uncover and remedy "structural Islamophobia" in the media industry**. There is no singular voice that speaks for Muslims and no singular understanding of Islamic beliefs and practices for media organisations to take on board.

If editors or journalists must attend media "awareness" training provided by groups like CfMM, they should ask the trainers how they can distinguish between genuine anti-Muslim bias or hatred on one hand, and legitimate criticism of Islamism or certain aspects of Islamic belief and practice, on the other. If they cannot or will not do this – or accuse those

355. https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?ref=watch_permalink&v=258818179566131

asking this crucial question of being "Islamophobic" – then it should be very clear that there is a problem.

4. **Demand that CfMM's methodology is made more transparent**. For example, request clarity on if – and how – CfMM distinguishes between the grounded and ungrounded "association of Muslims or Islam with negative behaviour".

Finally, we also offer a recommendation for Ofcom, which oversees the BBC:

5. **Make transparent the advice and training provided to the BBC from external groups, such as CfMM**. In June 2022, Ofcom admitted: "A lack of transparency has been a recurring feature of our assessment of the BBC's performance and concerns have been frequently raised by stakeholders."[356] This mainly applied to how the BBC was dealing with complaints. In March 2023, Ofcom announced a new, modernised BBC operating licence which required greater transparency from the BBC regarding "its performance, its plans for its content and services – including any significant changes – and the effectiveness of those changes".[357] It also ought to apply to the training and counsel the BBC receives. The public deserves to be fully aware of the influence CfMM and other external providers have on the BBC; the identity of the trainers; the staff who have been trained; the content, timing and cost of the training; and the advice provided.

356. https://www.ofcom.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0028/239176/How-Ofcom-regulates-the-BBC.pdf
357. https://www.ofcom.org.uk/news-centre/2023/new-bbc-operating-licence-fit-for-digital-future

Appendix 1: CfMM's Relationship with Key British Media Institutions

Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO)

IPSO - the Independent Press Standards Organisation – describes itself as "the independent regulator for the newspaper and magazine industry in the UK". It says it holds "newspapers and magazines to account for their actions, protect individual rights, uphold high standards of journalism and help to maintain freedom of expression for the press".[358] CfMM began cultivating a relationship with IPSO before its launch in the summer of 2019.

- **In October 2018, CfMM's then manager, Rizwana Hamid,** and the group's then director, **Miqdaad Versi**, attended the first working group meeting organised by IPSO to formulate guidelines on the reporting of Muslims and Islam in the UK.[359]
- In the same month, IPSO created "an informal working group" to help with IPSO's new guidance, "bringing together academics who have research experience in relation to Islam and Muslims in the UK and representatives of organisations interested in the coverage of Islam".[360]
- In July 2019, Miqdaad Versi represented the MCB at the IPSO roundtable on news reports concerning Muslims and Islam.[361]
- Later in the year, in December 2019, CfMM tweeted details about a meeting at IPSO:

> *CfMM working to make #Muslims voices heard. We met @IpsoNews to discuss concerns of our communities, & how we can further work together to address these. Chairman Sir Alan Moses retires soon, we wish him well & look forward to working with his successor Lord Edward Faulks QC.*[362]

- In February 2020, Rizwana Hamid met the new chair of IPSO, Lord Edward Faulks, and "shared CfMM's evidence on the British media's reporting of Islam and Muslims".[363]
- In March 2020, CfMM **submitted a response to the IPSO Editors Code Review.**[364]
- **In November 2020, with IPSO's publication of 'Reporting on Muslims and Islam', Muslims became the only religious**

358. https://www.ipso.co.uk/what-we-do/.
359. https://mailchi.mp/mcb/e-newsletter-october2018
360. https://web.archive.org/web/20190425082638/https://www.ipso.co.uk/news-press-releases/blog/ipso-blog-our-standards-and-monitoring-work-in-2019/
361. https://mailchi.mp/mcb/e-newsletter-may2019-464497
362. https://twitter.com/cfmmuk/status/1202267682202144770
363. https://mailchi.mp/mcb/february-2020-update-464801
364. 'Centre for Media Monitoring's response to Editors' Code of Practice Committee consultation on revisions to the Editors' Code of Practice', CfMM, 27 March 2020.

identity group in the country with dedicated IPSO guidance on media coverage.[365]

- In April-May 2021, CfMM met with IPSO's Chief Executive Charlotte Dewar, Jonathan Grun and Neil Benson from the Editor's Code Committee to discuss concerns about some of the limitations in newspaper regulations.[366]

The BBC

Two senior CfMM officials formerly worked for the BBC: CfMM director Rizwana Hamid worked in multiple BBC roles[367] during 1988-2017;[368] and CfMM's media monitoring analyst Faisal Hanif was a BBC researcher.[369] CfMM's official engagement with the BBC, arguably the most important news outlet in the UK, began at least as early as October 2018:

- In October 2018, Rizwana Hamid met with BBC Home Affairs Correspondent Dominic Casciani to discuss terminology used by the media.[370] (Hamid was the manager of the MCB's Media Monitoring Project from at least June 2018,[371] until CfMM was formally launched in July 2019, when she became CfMM's director.)
- In November 2018, the MCB welcomed the opportunity "to input into The BBC's Editorial Guidelines Consultation". The MCB said the guidance document it provided "reflects the views of our affiliates, and, we believe, a broad spectrum of Muslim communities in the UK".[372]
- In March 2019, Amanda Morris, then the MCB's community liaison officer, "did a round of BBC Regional Radio interviews speaking about Shamima Begum".[373] (Morris was the MCB's community liaison officer until the launch of CfMM in July 2019, and then became CfMM's community liaison officer.)
- In the same month, the MCB "had front page coverage in *The Guardian* and *Independent* on its work in challenging Islamophobia in the Conservative Party. Miqdaad Versi, who is spearheading the work, has been on the media, speaking to BBC Radio 4 and others about the scale of the problem. His work has been recognised by *The Guardian* newspaper which wrote a whole feature on his continuous work to see Islamophobia dealt with in the Conservative Party!"[374]
- On 6 November 2019, Rizwana Hamid met the BBC's specialist factual commissioning editors - Abigail Priddle and Daisy Scalchi – to discuss the media's coverage of Muslims and Islam and how they can improve their programming to better reflect and "normalise" Muslims as British citizens.[375]
- On 3 December 2019, CfMM held an event titled 'Reclaiming Our Narrative: Meet the Media', at which "Leading media professionals" spoke with the Muslim community about how they "can positively influence the narrative of Muslims and Islam".[376]

365. https://www.ipso.co.uk/media/1972/islam-guidance.pdf
366. https://mailchi.mp/mcb/april-may-2021-updates
367. https://cfmm.org.uk/team-rizwana-hamid/
368. https://www.linkedin.com/in/rizwana-hamid-169557146/
369. https://cfmm.org.uk/team-faisal-hanif/ This URL appears to be inactive but is archived at: https://web.archive.org/web/20210412152704/https://cfmm.org.uk/team-faisal-hanif/
370. https://mailchi.mp/mcb/e-newsletter-october2018
371. https://mailchi.mp/mcb/e-newsletter-june2018
372. https://mailchi.mp/mcb/e-newsletter-november2018
373. https://mailchi.mp/mcb/e-newsletter-february2019
374. https://mailchi.mp/mcb/e-newsletter-march2019
375. https://mailchi.mp/mcb/mcb-newsletter-october-464737.
376. https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/reclaiming-our-narrative-meet-the-media-tickets-83018629957

Experts from the BBC, ITV, the Press Association, and others discussed "what kind of stories they look for, what makes a story newsworthy, and where to send a story or idea".[377]

- In January 2020, Rizwana Hamid met BBC Commissioning Editor Daisy Scalchi,[378] to discuss "religious illiteracy in the media as well as Muslim contributors and talent for their religious and documentary programming".[379]
- On September 29, 2020, the BBC's security correspondent, Frank Gardner, was a speaker at the launch of a CfMM report titled 'How The British Media Reports Terrorism'. [380] In addition to CfMM's Rizwana Hamid and Faisal Hanif, other panellists included Jon Snow of Channel 4; Rohit Kachroo, ITV's Security Editor; and Lizzie Dearden, *The Independent*'s Home Affairs and Security Correspondent. Contributions were also provided by Alexander Gent, Chair of the National Association of Muslim Police; and Mohammed Kozbar, the Chair of Finsbury Park Mosque.

377. *Ibid.*

378. https://www.linkedin.com/in/daisy-scalchi-14171b18/

379. https://mailchi.mp/mcb/january-2020-update

380. https://cfmm.org.uk/event/online-panel-discussion-how-the-british-media-reports-terrorism/ A video is available at: https://cfmm.org.uk/events/terrorism-report-panel-discussion/

- On 1 October 2020, BBC Deputy News Editor Toby Castle was a speaker at CfMM's 'Meet the Media Webinar'.[381] Other participants included: Alison Phillips, *Daily Mirror* Editor; Diane Ridley, ITV's News Editorial Manager; Roohi Hasan, a Senior News Producer at ITV News; Emma Tucker, *The Sunday Times* Editor; Gary Jones, *Daily Express* Editor-in-Chief; and Peter Clifton, the Press Association's Editor-in-Chief.

- In April-May 2021, CfMM met senior executives at the BBC including Director General Tim Davie; Managing Editor Bob Shennan; the Head of Creative Diversity Nina Goswami; and Woman's Hour Editor Karen Dalziel. CfMM reported that it presented its "findings and concerns about the coverage of Muslims and Islam across the

381. https://twitter.ccom/miqdaad/status/1311934936165888000 and https://cfmm.org.uk/events/meet-the-media-2020/.

corporation and offered some training" and that "Tim Davie was very impressed with our work and wants to continue engagement. Bob Shennan called CfMM a very 'powerful machine'."[382]

- In July 2021, CfMM announced that it "organised a focus group for the BBC on their coverage of Muslims and Islam. Muslim community organisations and individuals who have done CfMM's 'How to Monitor the Media' workshops fed back their views to the heads of Radio & TV Religious Programming, the Head of Creative Diversity as well as other editors, commissioning editors and programme makers."[383] Participants provided feedback on numerous programmes, including 'Being Muslim', 'Meet the Khans', and 'Islam, Belfast & Me'. It was described as "the first of many feedback sessions CfMM organised with the BBC".
- On 30 November 2021, BBC Home Affairs Editor Mark Easton was a speaker at the launch of CfMM report 'British Media's Coverage of Muslims and Islam (2018-2020)' (examined in detail in this report).[384] Other participants included Alison Phillips, *Daily Mirror* Editor; Emma Tucker, *Sunday Times* Editor; Nesrine Malik, a *Guardian* columnist; and Inzamam Rashid, Sky's North of England correspondent.

382. https://mailchi.mp/mcb/april-may-2021-updates
383. https://mailchi.mp/mcb/monthly-update-july-2021
384. https://twitter.com/cfmmuk/status/1461242781926625285

- To mark its 25th anniversary in 2022, the MCB published a 53-page 'Mid-Term Report | Strategic Priorities', with a section on CfMM saying that it "will be feeding into the BBC's terminology guidebook and provide training to journalists at the BBC and other outlets with a new workshop to be launched in 2022." More specifically:

  The BBC engaged our team to facilitate a focus group of community representatives to feed back to them on a selection of content featuring Muslims/ Islamic themes, which was then circulated to management and department heads throughout the organisation. The BBC hopes to repeat this exercise annually.[385]

- In March 2023, Rizwana Hamid met with the BBC for journalist training.[386]
- The MCB's 2023 annual review adds that "CfMM Director Rizwana Hamid recently held high-level meetings with the BBC's new Director of Diversity & Inclusion, Chinny Okolidoh, and the D&I lead for News, Hajira Mahommed, to discuss representation, training, and recruitment."[387]

From the examples above, it is clear that CfMM has made significant efforts to engage with the BBC and influence its coverage of Muslims and Islam.

The Ethical Journalism Network (EJN)

In March 2023, CfMM contributed to a report published by the Ethical Journalism Network (EJN) titled 'Structural racism in UK newsrooms: Research and fieldwork conducted by the Ethical Journalism Network (EJN) January-July 2022'.[388] The EJN's report utilised CfMM's methodology.[389] The Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust funded the report to "identify and begin to address structural racism in UK journalism". The report's author, Dr Aida Al-Kaisy, "a media development consultant and academic researcher who has worked extensively on media projects globally", teaches at SOAS University of London where she completed her PhD.[390]

385. https://mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/AGMreport_28.01.21_2.02.pdf
386. https://us10.campaign-archive.com/?u=4efd81e7012b9e8ff1197ab2c&id=fdfc525b9d
387. https://mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/AGM-Mid-Term-Report-2024.pdf p. 12
388. https://ethicaljournalismnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/EJN_Structural-Racism_Report_Final_March_2023.pdf
389. *Ibid*., pp.12.13.
390. *Ibid*., p.3.

At the time of publication, CfMM tweeted that it was "Pleased to have contributed to this important report on structural racism in newsrooms from the @EJNetwork which used @cfmmuk methodology for content analysis."[391] In a thread on X, the EJN said that its report:

> *Finds UK newsroom practices continue to be exclusionary & racism commonplace. Incl. recommendations to address the challenges facing Black journalists.*
>
> *The report is based on 27 in-depth interviews with black journalists and stakeholders who have or are working in UK news media.*
>
> *The report used a number of combined methods for data collection, incl. @cfmmuk's methodology for the content analysis & @cityjournalism's support with the discourse analysis.*[392]

The report states that:

> *The EJN established a relationship with the Centre for Media Monitoring (CfMM) who have produced a comprehensive research report which examines the British media's reporting of Islam and Muslims.*[393] *The EJN partnered with CfMM to reproduce their methodology of monitoring and analysis of the British media using key words, and metrics such as association with negative aspects or behaviour, misrepresentation, generalisations, lack of due prominence to voice or identity, issues with imagery or headlines.*[394]

391. https://twitter.com/cfmmuk/status/1641002995159650304
392. https://twitter.com/EJNetwork/status/1640649197589262336
393. https://www.facebook.com/muslimcouncil.uk/videos/258818179566131
394. https://ethicaljournalismnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/EJN_Structural-Racism_Report_Final_March_2023.pdf

The EJN report analysed "coverage of the March 2021 report into racial and ethnic disparities in the UK by the government-appointed Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities (CRED) in print publications." Leaning on CfMM's methodology, the EJN report claimed to find:

> *The Telegraph and The Daily Mail used their white political and Whitehall editors to cover the [CRED] report. Sources and experts used in their coverage came entirely from government and the CRED itself. The two publications were more likely to associate negative aspects and behaviour with Black [sic.] and ethnic minority communities – for example violence. Coverage of the report is in the main uncritical, which is classified by the Centre for Media Monitoring methodology as revealing 'antagonistic bias' towards Black [sic.] and ethnic minority communities.*[395]

395. Ibid., p.28.

Appendix 2: The British Media's Coverage of Muslims and Islam (2018-2020)

Key Claims of the Report

The CfMM report claims to present the evidence not just for the general statement that "certain sections of the British media are hostile in their reporting towards Muslims and/or Islam", but also for the "specific differences in approach and attitude towards Muslims and/or Islam between the various publishers and broadcasters that make up the British media".[396] Its strength, the report contends, lies in the richness of the data it provides for a granular analysis of anti-Muslim and Islamophobic bias in Britain's published and broadcast journalism. Some of the key findings the report claims include:

- 14% of articles in UK press "biased" or "very biased"
- 21% of articles "antagonistic", only 3% "supportive"
- Almost 60% of articles associated negative aspects and behaviour with Muslims or Islam
- Almost 10% misrepresent Muslims and Islam
- 7% included one or more generalisations about Muslims and/or Islam
- 10% of opinion pieces generalise about Muslims and/or Islam
- The percentage of generalisations highest in the topics of Terrorism/Extremism (25%), Politics (18%), Middle East (17%) and Religion (15%)
- Just over 2% of headlines and images were misleading or inaccurate, just under 2% "biased" (71% of these concerning international events)

These and other findings appear in two text boxes on pages 30 and 31 of the report, as captured below:

396. https://cfmm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/CfMM-Annual-Report-2018-2020-digital.pdf

Bias

Articles assessed as 'Biased' or 'Very Biased' (14%)

Publications whose articles had the highest proportion of 'Very Biased' rating were: Christian Today (11.3%), The Spectator (10.9%) and Daily Mail Australia (10%)

21% of all articles assessed were categorised as 'Antagonistic' and only 3% were categorised as 'Supportive'

Publication with the highest proportion of 'Antagonistic' articles was The Spectator (37.3%), whilst New Statesman had the highest proportion of 'Supportive' articles (16.1%)

The themes which are the worst in terms of bias, are Religion, Terrorism and Extremism.

Misrepresentation

Almost 1 in 10 articles misrepresent Muslims and/or Islam

The majority of misrepresentation came via news reporting (82%)

Right-leaning and religious publications have the highest proportion of articles which misrepresent Muslim behaviours or beliefs

The Spectator magazine had the highest proportion of articles (1 in 4) which misrepresent Muslims and/or Islam. Daily Mail Australia and Christian Today followed with at least one in five articles

The worst cases of misrepresentation, all found in right leaning publications, led to libel cases by Muslims

Negative Aspects & Behaviours

Almost 60% of articles across all publications were identified as associating negative aspects and behaviour with Muslims or Islam.

Top 3 offenders were AFP, Reuters and Associated Press (AP).

Generalisations

7% per cent of all articles analysed included one or more generalisations about Muslims and/or Islam with the worst offenders being right-leaning or religious outlets

1 in 10 opinion pieces (10%) generalise about Muslims and/or Islam, despite the fact that only 6% of all articles were categorised under opinion

The percentage of generalisations are highest in the topics of Terrorism/Extremism (25%), Politics (18%), Middle East (17%) and Religion (15%)

Images & Headlines

Just over 2 per cent of headlines and images were misleading or inaccurate, whilst just under two per cent of all images were considered to be 'Biased'

71% of biased images were found in articles concerning international events

Right-leaning tabloids and religious publications have the greatest number of 'Irrelevant' and 'Misleading' headlines

Daily Mail Australia has the highest percentage of 'Irrelevant' and 'Misleading' headlines (14%), followed by The Sun (6%)

The report methodology

CfMM claims to have monitored 34 British media outlets via their online websites and 38 television channels (including all regional broadcasts) on a daily basis between October 2018 and September 2019. Using key words relating to Muslims and Islam, it identified and analysed almost 48,000 articles and 5,500 plus broadcast clips.[397]

All articles and clips were judged according to five "metrics" and assessed in response to five questions:

Metric	Question
Negative behaviour	Does the article associate Muslims or Islam with negative aspects or behaviour?
Misrepresentation	Does the article misrepresent any aspect of Muslim behaviour, belief or identity?
Generalisations	Does the article make generalising claims about Muslims or Islam?
Prominence	Does the article omit due prominence to a relevant Muslim voice or perspective?
Imagery & headlines	Does the image/headline depict Muslims/ Islam in an unfair/incorrect manner in accordance with the story?

The results from this analysis determined an overall bias rating:[398]

- Zero = "not biased"

397. *Ibid.*, pp.17, 23.
398. *Ibid.*, p.11.

- One = "not sure"
- Two or more affirmative answers = "biased"
- Four to five = "very biased"

Articles were furthermore categorised into:

- "Antagonistic bias": if the majority of the article is biased against Muslims or Islam.
- "Supportive bias": if the majority of the article portrays Muslims or Islam in a positive light.
- "Mixed": if elements of both supportive and antagonistic bias are present in the article.

The report's recommendations

The report makes no less than 27 recommendations. These are listed below together (not so in the report) to demonstrate the extent to which CfMM is effectively attempting to influence, not just news journalism, but also broadcast drama – an area that thrives on freedom of thought and expression. The wording below is exactly as it appears in the report.

Bias – publications

1. Avoid linking ordinary Muslim belief to crime, terrorism or extremism, unless there is a specific justifiable reason to do so.
2. Provide a platform to a broader range of Muslim perspectives, and avoid unrepresentative Muslim voices.
3. Increase representation of Muslims within editorial roles.
4. Encourage reporters to be aware and reflect on potential bias - unconscious or otherwise - and where appropriate, engage in relevant training.

Misrepresentation – publications

5. Ensure corrections and apologies (for inaccurate, misleading or misrepresentative reporting) are equal and proportionate (in size and position) to the original report.
6. Take extreme care in the terminology used, especially when using the term 'Islamism', to avoid misleading readers.
7. Religious terminology should be cross referenced with authentic Muslim and Islamic sources for accurate use.
8. Report crackdowns on Muslim populations with objectivity, ensuring appropriate levels of scepticism and challenge to the rationale provided by those in positions of power and accused of unfair treatment.

Negative Aspects and Behaviours – publications

9. Avoid reference to Muslims or Islam unless genuinely relevant to the story.
10. For news wire agencies in particular, take particular care in the terms used (given they are often copied wholesale in other print media), and reliance on singular witness reports especially related to terrorism given how unreliable they have been proven to be in many cases.
11. Assess overall coverage (in terms of negativity towards Muslims), and reflect on whether this is appropriate.

Generalisations – publications

12. Train journalists and editors to ensure they are aware of racist tropes and conspiracy theories about Muslims.
13. Avoid framing articles in line with such tropes or conspiracy theories, and ensure sufficient context is provided so as not to mislead the reader.
14. Stop framing FGM as a Muslim practice.

Generalisations - broadcast

15. Avoid stereotypes and tropes about Muslims as the main representation of Muslim characters or storylines.
16. Consult with scholars or experts on normative Islamic beliefs and practices where relevant to the story.
17. Right-wing and anti-Muslim figures given a platform should be introduced and challenged properly.
18. Other view points should be given due prominence.

Imagery and Headlines - publications

19. Avoid using generic images of Muslims when they risk reinforcing stereotypes of Muslims and/or Islam.
20. Ensure context is provided when illustrating dramatic incidents (e.g. this is the practice of a minority).
21. Avoid using an image of Muslim women in hijab/burqa to illustrate oppression of women, unless specifically relevant to the story.
22. Avoid images of terrorist propaganda, especially in the immediate aftermath of a terror attack.
23. Avoid the religious identity of an individual or group unless it is genuinely relevant to the issue being reported.
24. Ensure headlines - when read alone - are not misleading and are substantiated by the article.
25. Avoid repeating speculative, false or offensive claims of anti-

Muslim agitators in a headline, especially if they are disputed.

Imagery and Headlines - broadcast

26. Avoid the use of everyday mainstream symbols and stock imagery of visibly Muslim women to illustrate 'Extremism/ Terrorism'.
27. Avoid imagery that scapegoats Muslims.

Appendix 3: Islamist and far-right terror attacks in Great Britain since 1999

We chose 1999 as the starting point because it marked the first serious far-right terror attack of the modern era. Only attacks causing death or injury are included. Attacks where the death or injury were not tried as terrorism, or officially identified as terrorism in the absence of a trial, are not included. Death and injury figures do not include perpetrators. Perpetrator figures include those who died carrying out the attack or were subsequently convicted for their role in it. List as of March 2025.

Far-right terror attacks

Incident	Date	Dead	Inj	Perps
London nail bombings (x3)	17-30.4.99	3	140	1
Pavlo Lapshyn	29.4.13	1	0	1
Jo Cox MP	16.6.16	1	0	1
Finsbury Park	19.6.17	1	10	1
Vincent Fuller	16.3.19	0	1	1
Dover migrant centre	30.10.22	0	2	1
Callum Parslow	2.4.24	0	1	1
Total (7 incidents, 9 attacks)		6	154	7

Islamist terror attacks

Incident	Date	Dead	Inj	Perps
DC Stephen Oake	14.1.03	1	0	1
7 July 2005 attacks (x4)	7.7.05	52	784	4
Glasgow Airport	30.6.07	0	5	2
Stephen Timms MP	14.5.10	0	1	1
Lee Rigby	22.5.13	1	0	2
Westminster Bridge/ HoP	22.3.17	5	48	1
Manchester Arena	22.5.17	22	239	2
London Bridge	3.6.17	8	48	3

Parsons Green	15.9.17	0	30	1
Westminster car	14.8.18	0	3	1
Manchester Victoria	31.12.18	0	3	1
Fishmongers' Hall	29.11.19	2	3	1
Whitemoor prison	9.1.20	0	3	2
Streatham stabbings	2.2.20	0	3	1
Reading	20.6.20	3	3	1
Munawar Hussain	2.12.20	0	2	1
Sir David Amess MP	15.10.21	1	0	1
Liverpool Women's Hospital	14.11.21	0	1	1
Terence Carney, Hartlepool	15.10.23	1	1	1
Total (19 incidents, 22 attacks)		**96**	**1177**	**28**

Appendix 4: Mohammed Kozbar's tweets and retweets

Screenshots of Kozbar retweets

Kozbar reposted a conspiracy theory claiming Israel was deploying "new weapons that cause bodies to evaporate on the scene."

Kozbar reposted a video of the Russian foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov, saying that the West was operating double standards in Ukraine and Gaza.

He reposted a claim by the columnist Owen Jones that "Israel and its Far-Right Western allies are working together to whip up anti-Muslim and anti-Arab racism in the West."

He reposted one-sided accounts of the attacks on Jews in Amsterdam.

He reposted a claim that the Israelis ("these monsters") had a secret plan to kill 2.3 million Palestinians.

He reposted an attack on "people… in No 10" for acting like Israeli government spokesmen.

He reposted an attack on the "sheer impotence of Keir Starmer and David Lammy" over the Israeli offensive in Lebanon.

He reposted a claim that the Conservative Party was now controlled by the far-right and comparable to the AfD.

He reposted something saying "Germany has a fondness for genocides."

He reposted message of solidarity with woman who called Rishi Sunak a coconut.

He reposted a post saying Starmer "doesn't even pretend to show he's interested" in British Muslim disillusionment. "Muslim voters appear to have minimal relevance as far as he's concerned."

He said Ajmal Masroor's candidacy against Labour in Bethnal Green was "good news."[399]

He reposted the candidate who nearly defeated Wes Streeting saying her achievement was "astounding" and a "beautiful people-powered movement… against the two-party nightmare." He also reposted her earlier join-my-campaign tweets.

399. https://x.com/KozbarM/status/1796842878171271295

He hosted and introduced Jeremy Corbyn at victory rally in the Finsbury Park mosque after his election win against Labour.[400]

He reposted an MAB tweet saying Labour was "firmly in the grasp of right-wing extremists"

(this is the full tweet: https://x.com/MABOnline1/status/1795913397826969730*)*

He reposted a tweet accusing Rachel Reeves of receiving "huge amounts of regular cash from Israel lobbyists."

He reposted a tweet saying: "To Zionists, today is the day of Israel's founding. To people with morals, today is the day of remembering the Nakba."

400. https://x.com/MiddleEastEye/status/1809695574930739433

He reposted content accusing Starmer of being a "liar."

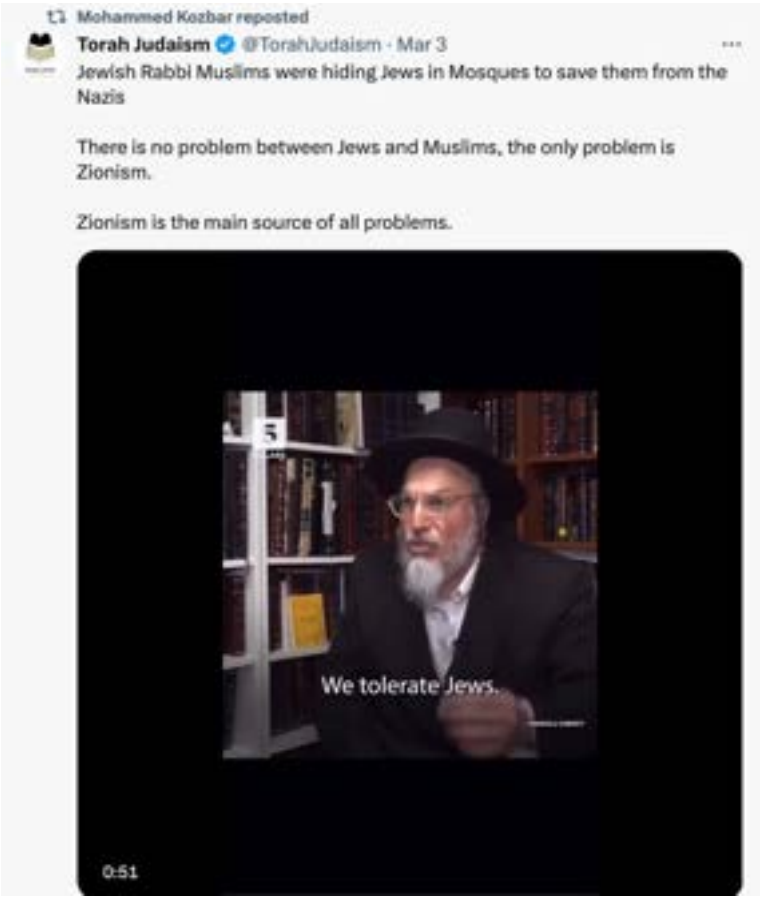
He reposted content describing the ruling against prayer at Michaela school as an example of "societal-wide Islamophobia" and that "targets Muslim students" and claiming that Muslims who cannot pray at the relevant times are forced to leave their jobs (ignoring prayer compensation, which says that Muslims who are obliged to work at prayer times are allowed to make the prayers up later.)

Reposted praise for the direct action group Palestine Action.

Reposted defence of CAGE and MEND for "reach[ing] beyond Muslim communities to unite people to tackle institutional Islamophobia and/or oppose Britain's complicity in the murder of Palestinians."

Retweeted the MAB on the extremism definition: "MAB condemns Govt's erosion of civil liberties & politicisation of anti-extremism. The redefinition is a cynical move to appease the hard-right, targeting mainstream British Muslim orgs. All political parties must oppose this Orwellian narrative."

Reposted content saying "Zionism is the main source of all problems."



Retweeted a conspiracy video claiming that pro-Israel forces are controlling Britain.

> *"Pro-Israel forces currently have control of NHS, Foreign Office, Home Office and Ministry of Defence data, your data…. They want to control you… The very company the British police use to hack phones is… an Israeli company controlled by a former member of Unit 8200… They also use something called Nice Systems, a subsidiary of Elbit… Britain [is] essentially a colony of the United States and Israel."*

https://x.com/DoubleDownNews/status/1758434138950979649

Reposted content accusing Auschwitz Foundation of "actively supporting the Gaza genocide."

Reposted launch of Muslim Vote.

Reposted further conspiracy theory content by Lowkey ("why has Tommy Robinson been mobilised to support Israel on the streets of London?") : "what we see here is an intertwining of interests between Zionist actors around the world who believe that their interests are served by not only funding violent settlement in the West Bank and a war against indigenous Palestinian people, but also pushing domestic Islamophobia within Britain and the US."

Reposted MEND content: "Is it a coincidence that Islamophobes Katie Hopkins and Tommy Robinson have been reinstated on Twitter/X just when the Government is desperate for a hate mob to form and counter huge, peaceful Palestinian protests?"

Reposted Lowkey content saying that Sunak should be considered "not fit to be prime Minister" (the host says Sunak is an Israeli "agent") because of his wife's holding in Infosys, which has an Israeli director.

Reposted: "This is what we mean when we say Zionism is anti-Semitism. It is a deranged, demented colonial ideology that requires the genocide of Palestinians to maintain a violent settler fantasy -- and Jews, like me, who oppose it, won't ever forgive or forget these repulsive monsters."

Reposted that the creation of Israel was illegal.

£10.00
ISBN: 978-1-917201-60-5

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