DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

# MAINSTREAM AND FAR RIGHT ISLAMOPHOBIA

A UK-Germany comparison

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Far-right figures propagate the so-called »Great Replacement Theory«, which assumes an elite conspiracy aimed at deliberately minoritising an imagined ethnically homogenous white majority.



The framing of »clan criminality« has increasingly been used in Germany to portray criminals as members of archaic family networks, supposedly in contrast to »Western values«. In the UK, responses to extremist violence and gangled sex abuse is often racialised as a Muslim problem.



The far right is organising internationally to build a globally connected movement of ethnonationalists that share Muslim communities as a common target. The left and progressive response must also be international.



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### Introduction

The far right is now a prominent part of the political scene in both Germany and the UK. Progressives in Germany and the UK are having to address how we push back against those that seek to undermine democracy and promote violence and hatred.

Part of this effort needs to be directed to understanding the ways in which far-right language and tropes are becoming normalised and moving into mainstream public debates. Accordingly, this research report starts from the assumption that the far right may be *rising ideologically* even when it appears to be *declining organisationally* – especially during a process of *convergence* between the right and far right (Renton 2019; see also Cooper 2021; Faulkner et al 2017).

This report analyses the extent to which far-right Islamophobia is being normalised in Germany and the UK. Collecting data points from social media, print media, broadcast media, and parliamentary discourse, we identified common themes and patterns of anti-Muslim hatred. We show how Islamophobia is used to mobilise a base of support in defence of a nationalistic ideology that defines "the West" as a predominantly white, "Judeo-Christian" society.

In both Germany and the UK, far-right parties latched on to the so-called »migrant crisis« of 2015 as a critical moment of »threat« to their ideal homogeneous, ethnically white society. As this report shows, specific targeting of Muslims commonly underpins far-right anti-migrant discourse. Both German and UK far-right figures subscribe to and propagate the so-called »Great Replacement Theory«, which holds that the increasingly multicultural and ethnically diverse nature of European populations reflects an elite conspiracy aimed at deliberately minoritising the white majority.

In the UK, anti-Muslim prejudice was used by Eurosceptic political figures to fuel the campaign to leave the European Union (EU). The data points studied demonstrate a strong link between Islamophobic discourse entering the mainstream and pro-Brexit sentiment.

Associating Muslim communities with criminality is also identified as a recurring theme. In the UK, attempts to stereotype Muslim men as sex offenders, paedophiles and »rape gangs« are common and in Germany the far

right seek to normalise the concept of Muslim »clan criminality«.

Both countries have seen attacks on Muslim politicians and a backlash against Muslims being appointed to official positions in government and civil service. These attempts to curb Muslim visibility in the public sphere are a form of exclusion and systemic discrimination.

This report seeks to provide a resource for the scrutiny and monitoring of these incidents. It underlines the ongoing challenges facing anti-racists and human rights activists in Germany and the UK. In the conclusion we also make a number of recommendations to policy-makers as to the way ahead.

Research for this report involved collating instances of Islamophobia from figures in the UK and German media over the last decade. In total we collected 82 data points, comprising 48 from the UK and 34 from Germany.

### 1

### **GERMANY**

## Islamophobia and the rise of the German radical right

This section focuses on the state of the far right in Germany, and its strategic use of anti-Muslim racism to penetrate mainstream discourse. It zooms in on common themes that transcend the far right, looking especially at the 2015 migrant »crisis«, »clan criminality«, and »cancel culture« discourses. While the *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD) is the most important actor for the far right in Germany, this report also analyses the role of (»alternative«) media figures such as Julian Reichelt, Roland Tichy, and David Berger, who play a key role in mainstreaming Islamophobia and amplifying far-right campaigns. Additionally, communication from leading figures in the centre-right party, the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), helps to understand the overlap between far-right and conservative politics.

Islamophobia and anti-Muslim racism are not just markers of the German far right. Throughout German society a perceived cultural distance between »Islamic« and »western« culture is commonly articulated. The fraught relationship of German institutions and Germany's political and cultural establishment with Muslim citizens and migrants is not a recent development either. It builds on a decades-long struggle with the question of whether Germany considers itself an Einwanderungsgesellschaft (a country shaped by migration) or not. This is an odd »debate« to have, given that millions of immigrants have settled in Germany since the 1960s, thus inevitably shaping the country and its identity, but it also reflects an enduring tendency towards an ethnic definition of what Germany is. This provides an avenue for the radical right into mass cultural assumptions - and underlines the importance of promoting an inclusive conception of Germany and its history, which recognises the lived experience of millions of modern German citizens. The ethnic definition of Germany lends itself to exclusionary impulses and the ongoing essentialisation and othering of Muslims by political actors across the political spectrum.

### Overview of the German (new) far right

The contemporary German far right for the most part pursues what it calls a »Mosaic-Right« strategy, which seeks to cohere different elements into a unifying, »patriotic« politics. The aim is to unite broad swathes of society, from

conservatives to right-wing extremists. The most striking example of this strategy of expanding the electorate beyond traditional far-right voters is the so-called »migration crisis« of 2015 that transformed the AfD into a major political force in Germany.

Founded in 2013, as a movement opposed to the political project of the Euro currency and in particular to German underwriting of bailouts for EU economies during the Eurozone debt crisis, the AfD radicalised its approach significantly in 2015 and after. This saw the party adopt hardline positions on asylum and immigration policy. Today, the direction of the party is increasingly in the hands of its right-wing extremist fraction which is centred around Björn Höcke, head of the Thuringian AfD faction, and his allies. In the 2021 federal elections the party garnered 10.3 per cent of the vote. While this was a loss compared to the 2017 result of 12.7 per cent (Bundestagswahl 2021: Endgültiges Ergebnis - Der Bundeswahlleiter, 2021) this does not mean the party is fading from relevance. It has continued to build on its core base in eastern states. In Saxony, the party is polling at 30 per cent and in Thuringia it is the largest party with 26.8 per cent of voters behind it.

This period has also witnessed a proliferation of far right »educational« and »cultural« initiatives in German society directly related to the money, influence, and attention garnered through the success of the AfD. There is now a large variety of NGOs, publishing houses, and think-tanks that attempt to influence society and achieve some form of »cultural hegemony« for the far right.

This radical right has also been trying to capitalise on the COVID-19 pandemic and the traumas, instability, and disruption it entailed for millions of people. In this and the other developing crises of the 21st century, they have identified an opportunity for authoritarian forces to undermine democratic and constitutional institutions and the protection of minorities, and to attack the left.

States of emergency and apocalypse scenarios have always occupied a central place in the ideological cosmos of the far right. The aforementioned Great Replacement Theory has gained ground in German far-right circles, depicting a supposed global conspiracy of »Islamic expansion« by means of »land grabs« by migrants and the expulsion of »native«

white Europeans. The popularity of this »theory« on the new radical right globally provides a consummate illustration of the importance of Islamophobia to these movements and actors.

# Terminology: Islamophobia & racism in Germany

The term Islamophobia is widely used in public German discourse and by academics to describe a general rejection of Islam and of actual or suspected Muslims. However, the debate on whether Islamophobia is the correct term to describe and analyse hostile attitudes towards Muslims is ongoing. Critics of the term Islamophobia point out that "phobia" refers to the irrational emotions of those who devalue Muslims and makes their reaction the object of analysis, rather than Muslims that experience prejudicial and discriminatory attitudes.

Anti-Muslim racism has emerged as a favoured frame of analysis in this context. This starts from the assumption that discrimination towards Muslims involves depicting the community as a homogeneous group to which certain negative characteristics are assigned and which is subsequently seen as »foreign«. Using the term anti-Muslim racism allows for a more fundamental analysis of this essentialisation of Muslims and Muslim experiences.

Structural racism, which pervades institutions, is underreported and analysed – a situation that Germany has in common with many other countries. Racism is often portrayed as isolated or individualised incidents, rather than a general problem requiring public policy intervention. This runs contrary to the lived reality of many people in Germany.

22 per cent of the total population reported having experienced racism in their own lives. 49 per cent say they personally know someone who was a victim of racism (DeZiM, 2022). Studies indicate that Islamophobia is strongly correlated with xenophobia and the rejection of immigration (Logvinov, 2017). Therefore, assessing how effectively farright actors utilise Islamophobia is a good shorthand for considering the overall impact of the far right in Germany.

Muslims in Germany are especially vulnerable to discrimination. A comparative analysis by the Expert Council of German Foundations for Integration and Migration (SVR) concluded that among immigrants, Muslims report feeling discriminated against significantly more often (55 per cent) than Christians (29 per cent) or people without religious affiliation (32 per cent) (SVR-Forschungsbereich, 2018). This pertains especially to hijab-wearing women who are the most likely to report having experienced discrimination in the past (Salikutluk et al., 2022).

In addition to this always existing undercurrent of racism and discrimination, German society today is faced with an anti-democratic populism which has a home in German parliament with the AfD. Almost 20 per cent of the population think that too much consideration is given to minorities

in public policy debates and around 16 per cent agree with the statement: »The ruling parties are deceiving the people« (Andreas Zick and Beate Küpper, 2021). While this rightwing populist sentiment remains minoritarian in German society overall, it is accumulating a significant and increasingly radicalised base that has a clear outlet for political representation in the AfD.

### Einwanderungsgesellschaft: the debate that shouldn't be a debate?

Germany historically struggles with a self-image as an Einwanderungsgesellschaft (»a country shaped by migration«) and the role of Islam in society. In October 2010, the then German president Christian Wulff articulated a vision of German society that embraced immigration and multiculturalism. He said, »Christianity is undoubtedly part of Germany. Judaism is a part of Germany. That is our Christian-Jewish history. But Islam now also is a part of Germany« (Wulff, 2010). In doing so, Wulff, a member of the CDU, positioned himself against large parts of his own party that had long rejected the Einwanderungsgesellschaft view of Germany. In 2015, Angela Merkel doubled down on Wulff's position, declaring herself »chancellor of all Germans«. Specifying what this meant she said, »Everyone who lived in Germany, regardless of their origin.« Her spokesperson later summarised her position as, »Islam belongs to Germany« (Detjen, 2015).

In truth, of course, there should be no »discussion« of whether Germany is or is not an *Einwanderungsgesellschaft*. Millions of immigrants have settled in Germany since the 1960s and have quite obviously shaped the country profoundly. Germany's post-war reconstruction was built on the back of extensive guest worker programmes, most famously with Turkey but also extending to a number of other states. The West German state had expected migrants to return to their »home« after their period of »guest« work, but of course many made new relationships, forged new communities and built new lives in the country.

For several decades these workers and their descendants lacked a pathway to German citizenship. It was only in the 1990s with the reunification of Germany that the country began to move away from a highly ethnic conception of national citizenship. Over time it has gradually become more inclusive and progressive. Today, the centre-left government of the SPD, Greens, and FDP propose to make it easier for migrants to attain citizenship by reducing the necessary number of years of residence and language requirements, and providing more opportunities for dual citizenship. This would mean former »guest workers« would be able to obtain German citizenship more easily. These plans were criticised by leading conservative politicians. Andrea Lindholz of the CDU sister party CSU argued, »Citizenship is the end of successful integration«, a process that also includes adapting to Germany's »Christian occidental values« (Lindholz, 2022).

In effect, the reality of Germany as *Einwanderungsgesell-schaft* is largely accepted. What remains contested, at least

within some conservative circles, is whether this is a desirable state of affairs or some kind of historical error. In the 2015 »migration crisis« these fault lines reappeared and it became more acceptable within some circles to once again reopen the question of Germany's identity and whether it was »at risk« in the face of the country's high levels of migration.

### »Clan Criminality«

Few things illustrate the systematic othering of Muslims in Germany more than the phenomenon of »clan criminality«. This is a label that is applied to offenders by police and prosecutors insofar as they fulfil often arbitrary and racist criteria such as shared surnames. For example, the parking offence of one person will be seen as a trivial matter, while the parking offence of a person whose surname is arbitrarily deemed to belong to a »clan« can quickly turn into a »clan crime«. The terminology is originally drawn from studies of kinship relations among organised crime groups but has increasingly tended towards racial generalisations of Muslim groups as »Arab clans« and »blood families« (von Lampe and Knickmeier, 2019), especially when translated into the political sphere.

This framing has increasingly been used by conservative media and far-right actors to portray criminals as members of archaic family networks, supposedly in contrast to »Western values«. Criminal networks associated with Muslim or non-white memberships receive disproportionate attention in these discussions. An impression is deliberately cultivated that clans dominate entire cities, that certain parts of cities are »lawless«, and that the state is helpless. The AfD draws a clear connection between »clans« and »Islamist terror« (AfD-Fraktion Bundestag 2019). Law enforcement have also utilised »anti-clan« narratives to justify problematic practices, such as violent police raids against shisha bars on unsubstantiated grounds (Schulz and Tajeri, 2022).

In February 2020, Friedrich Merz, the current leader of the CDU, was asked in a press conference about his stance on far-right extremism. The interview occurred six days after a racially motivated terrorist attack that had killed 10 people in Hanau. Merz stated that there is a "massive problem with right-wing radicalism« in Germany. However, he then quickly pivoted to talking about "lawless spaces in inner cities« and the importance of "border controls«. The reporter then asked if they were "correct in inferring that your answer to the problem of right-wing radicalism is to raise the issue of clan crime, border controls, etc.? And if not, what is it?« To which Merz simply answered "The answer is yes« (Phoenix 2020).

Owing to how explicitly and emphatically Merz answered this question, the episode encapsulates a line of thinking that is often left implicit in much conservative thinking on how to combat the danger of violent extremism; namely, that the best way to »fight« right-wing radicalism is to be tougher against the »clans«, against people that are perceived as »others«, at the border and in the community (Reichelt 2018).

## 2015: The far right's successes have been significant

The conjuncture of 2015 remains the »big accelerator« event that frames all discussion of migration in Germany. It provides a crucial point of comparison for today because the positions taken by the centre-right then and now have changed quite radically. A major victory for the AfD and the wider far-right bloc has been the shift of the CDU away from a relatively inclusive and liberal account of migration and its relationship to German identity.

In the years following the refugee »crisis« of 2015–2016 the far right made the most out of running on the migration question. The AfD built its political brand around a rigorous rejection of Merkel's migration policies, a position that is broadly shared by its voters (Hambauer and Mays, 2018).

Central to this message is the myth that Angela Merkel unilaterally opened Germany's borders and let one million refugees enter the country. While in truth, her government simply maintained the historic support of Germany for the Schengen system, the far right have found the myth of an »open« Germany to be a potent weapon in their campaign against the political establishment.

The AfD have been happy to stir up moral panics to prosecute this campaign. In 2018, 242 AfD press releases focused on criminal offences (Hestermann and Hoven, 2019). In 95 per cent of the cases in which the nationality of suspects was referenced, they were described as non-German or having a »migration background«. In their communication the AfD is demanding hardline policies against immigrants and foreigners living in Germany, especially those of Muslim faith, with communication on the topic of migration focusing on immigrants from Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq.

# Refugees from Ukraine today vs. refugees in 2015

Between February and September 24, 2022, 997,895 refugees from Ukraine were registered in the Central Register of Foreigners (AZR), according to the Federal Ministry of the Interior (Integration, 2022). The difference in political reaction to this influx of refugees from Ukraine compared to the reactions to movement of people in 2015 at the height of the »European refugee crisis« has been quite astounding. In 2022, notions of defending European freedom, a newfound kinship between Europeans, and the (mostly) white refugees from Ukraine dominated popular discourse. More importantly, there was no discussion on closing German borders by suspending Schengen. Overall, this led to remarkable political results that would have been previously unthinkable. Most notably the broad support for the agreement on a common asylum led to Directive 2001/55/EC, which meant that Ukrainian citizens were accepted in all EU states without asylum procedures and were granted protection status for up to three years.

The difference in treatment also had a visible, practical implication at times. In early March, Syrian and Afghan residents had to vacate a state-owned shared accommodation for refugees overnight because Ukrainian refugees were being accommodated there instead (correctiv.org, 2022). At the outset of the war, the moderator of the flagship talk show of German public broadcaster ARD, *Hart aber Fair* (»Hard but Fair«), referenced the initial »welcoming culture« in 2015 and the subsequent downturn of public sentiment with regard to newcomers. Their question, »Will it be different this time?«, was answered by the conservative publicist Gabor Steingart who said »I could imagine it working this time!« because »they (the Ukrainians) are our cultural group, they are Christians« (bild.de, 2022).

This is a stark contrast to how refugees from Muslim countries are portrayed as unable to integrate into German society, despite decades of evidence to the contrary. The far right often refer to themselves as the sole representatives of das Volk ("the people"), presenting a view of Germany that is, in essence, ethnically homogenous, white and Christian. In this context, the far right commonly warns against "Islamisation" when talking about the migration issue, a term they use to refer to the forced introduction of allegedly "foreign" norms and rules emanating from Muslim countries and the subsequent downfall of German society (Reichelt, J. 2022a; von Schuler and Solms-Laubach, 2018; Welt 2018).

Since 2015 the far right's position on migration has not only penetrated the public discourse but has, to some degree, become an accepted position in respectable society. In the summer of 2021, as the war in Afghanistan escalated, Armin Laschet, then CDU candidate for chancellor, warned of new »movements of refugees towards Europe« and concluded that »2015 must not be repeated!« (FAZ 2021). Seen in tandem with the relatively welcoming atmosphere that marked public debate on the Ukrainian refugee crisis a year later, it must be acknowledged that the far right achieved significant success in the public re-imagination of the »migration crisis« of 2015. The categories of »undesirable migrant« and »Muslim« became used synonymously, albeit often only implicitly, in circles that go far beyond the traditional radical right (SWR 2021; Sueddeutsche.de 2022).

#### Freedom of speech discourses, »cancel culture« and »culture wars«

There are two key other phenomena present in the culture war discourse that prevails on the German radical right: first, a homogenised in-group is counterposed to a series of social groups that do not conform to the white patriarchal and Christian conception of the true Germany, e.g., non-white migrants, Muslims and other ethnic minorities, feminists, and the LGBTQ+ community; second, there is a subjective or self-proclaimed anti-elitism which defines the elite as an out of touch, liberal order of well-educated and progressive groups that have seized positions of power in society. These two strands of this culture war coalesce

around the »Great Replacement« conspiracy which, in Germany, was popularly associated with the »Identitarian Movement«.1

Public broadcasting institutions have been frequently targeted in this context. For the far right they sit at the apex of institutions that have normalised anti-racism, proactive legislation to combat discrimination, and support for human rights. Muslim women working in public broadcasting have faced especially fierce attacks and campaigns from the far right. One case that encapsulates these issues is that of Ferda Ataman and the so-called *Kartoffel*-gate (»Potato-gate«).

In June 2022 the federal cabinet, consisting of German chancellor and all federal ministers, proposed publicist Ferda Ataman to head the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency. Normally, the confirmation of this proposal in the German parliament would have been a formality. In this case, however, there was a concerted effort, most prominently by ex-Bild Editor-in-Chief, Julian Reichelt, to stop her confirmation. This sentiment was shared by prominent figures in the CDU, the Bild newspaper, AfD, and the FDP. Reichelt condemned her as a »Muslim racist«:

»Ferda Ataman is a Muslim racist. Yes, there is that too. Frequently, in fact. Political Islam is the biggest racist movement in the world. And no, someone like that does not belong in the office of the anti-racism commissioner. Especially not with votes from the FDP« (Reichelt 2022b).

Central to the criticism of Ataman was a column she wrote in 2020 for Spiegel Online (Ataman, 2020). In the column she reflected on the infamous term »Nafri«, an internal acronym used by German police to identify men of »North African« origin, which was widely communicated in the aftermath of the acts of sexual violence committed during the Cologne New Year's Eve celebrations in 2015. Subsequently, the term Nafri became a derogatory shorthand and meme in far-right and conservative circles (Berger 2018; Reichelt 2022b). Ataman settled on the term »potatoes« as an alternative to describe Germans without a migration background. She did not invent the term, which was already widely used in German youth and pop culture as an ironic, colloquial term based on the assumption that a particularly large number of potatoes are consumed in Germany.

Ataman suffered incessant abuse as a result, even though the term has no historically charged history or violent meaning. Her work to increase diversity in journalism by supporting journalists of colour and media professionals with immigration heritage was denigrated by a wide array

While its most prominent supporters have suffered from deplatforming, and the movement is no longer as visible a force in German politics, its cadres have moved to new places, working for AfD parliamentarians (Schindler, 2022), think tanks, or magazines that are all part of a growing network of far-right institutions aiming to influence the mainstream discourse.

of actors from AfD, FDP and CDU. She was branded as an example of »Germany-hating identity politics« and a representative of sinister networks that downplay the dangers of political Islam (Ploß 2022). Despite this concerted campaign against her, Ataman was confirmed by the German parliament in July 2022 to be its Independent Federal Anti-Discrimination Commissioner.

### Relationship to »anti-anti-Semitism« discourses

In public, the German far right have developed an instrumental relationship to anti-Semitism. The AfD, for instance, portrays itself as pro-Israel and pro-Jewish. The AfD position themselves in this way because it brings clear strategic benefits. It supports their aim to appeal to a broader constituency because anti-Semitism is seen as a core characteristic of right-wing extremism. Therefore, positioning themselves as supporting Jewish life in Germany and a pro-Israel foreign policy creates the appearance of respectability. Germany's Erinnerungskultur, its »culture of remembrance« regarding the horrors of the Nazis and the Holocaust, is fundamentally central to the country's political discourse and modern self-image. Often this culture of remembrance is credited with keeping the far right in check as it is enshrined legislation that forbids the usage of certain symbols, phrases, and gestures that are linked to Nazi ideology. Prominent figures of the far right have claimed in the past that this Erinnerungskultur has become a »cult of guilt« (see Cooper and Molkenbur 2019) that is holding the country back, but their more astute (and therefore dangerous) elements recognise the importance of adapting to this wider sentiment.

Positioning the party as critical of anti-Semitism also frames the way in which they understand German identity and its (for them) racial exclusion of Muslims and other non-white groups of immigrant heritage. When talking about Muslims, the far right frequently rely on a false dichotomy between Germany as the imagined »Christian-Jewish Occident« and »Islam«. Consequently, they claim that anti-Semitism occurs primarily among refugees and Muslims, while downplaying the role of anti-Semitism in German society and history (Pfahl-Traughber, 2017). The former AfD party leader Frauke Petry made headlines with her statement in 2017 calling the AfD »one of the few political guarantors of Jewish life even in times of illegal anti-Semitic migration« (Kamann, 2017). In this way, cynical statements of public support for Jewish life in Germany are used to service their anti-migration positions. They deliberately and repeatedly confuse anti-Semitic policies or positions of specific actors and states with the global Muslim community as a whole.

#### Conclusion

In Germany, the essentialisation and othering of Muslims is inseparable from racist migration policies and the »debate« over whether the country's identity should be seen as reflective of, and shaped by, this history of migration or something called into question by it. These policies and discourses are deeply embedded in everyday culture, pro-

viding an opening for Islamophobia parties and movements, especially the AfD. The instrumentalisation of the migration »crisis« of 2015 was the great accelerator for the far right, which effectively transformed the AfD overnight into a major force in national politics and the leading party in many of the states of the former East Germany.

Many of the contemporary mainstream discourses on migration in Germany centre around the infamous sentence that »2015 cannot be repeated«. Seen in the context of the relatively welcoming approach to Ukrainian refugees, this public discussion involves an implicit equivalence between the category of the »undesirable migrant« and »Muslim«. Islamophobic messaging ties in perfectly with the conspiracy theory at the heart of the far right and the Great Replacement Theory, and lends itself to continued attacks on democratic and public institutions under the guise of freedom of speech and anti-elitism. There is a danger that the shared ethnic conception of national identity (which was the traditional historic norm and has only really been called into question over the last fifteen years) between these far-right forces and more mainstream conservatives creates a philosophical basis for convergence of these forces. This is especially a risk when the right is under pressure to »unite« against the centre and centre-left bloc now governing Germany.

While the focus of this report is on the manifestations of anti-Muslim racism and their relationship to the danger of both radicalisation and »convergence« with the centreright, it is important to recognise that democracy, the rule of law, and anti-racism draw on increasingly deep societal reserves in Germany. Some 26 per cent of the German population come from a migrant background. The current German parliament has a historically high representation for the ethnic minorities, though at 11.3 per cent it is still well below the proportion of the population of migrant heritage.

While the current government is promoting cautious reform of German immigration law and campaigned on a platform of diversity and openness, the notably Islamophobic rhetoric employed by some conservatives and the far right show that these gains may prove to be fragile, or at least cannot be taken for granted. Ongoing campaigning work against the dangers of the far right and for affirmative action on Islamophobia, anti-Muslim racism, and all forms of xenophobia and discrimination are vital in this context. Above all, measures to reform security governance and policing, recognising the role of structural racism, are vital to achieve substantive progress.

### 2

### UK

This section focuses on the mainstreaming of far-right Islamophobic discourse and anti-Muslim hatred in the UK in recent decades, looking particularly at the 2015 migrant »crisis«, campaigning rhetoric around the 2016 EU referendum, and the situation post-Brexit. Figures like Tommy Robinson, Katie Hopkins, Nigel Farage, and Boris Johnson loom large in this context. However, anti-Muslim hatred is not a sudden or new problem introduced by the far right. Rather, it is a symbiosis of centuries-long state-led violence against Muslim majority populations and decades of mainstream political rhetoric demonising Muslims and racialised peoples.

As highlighted in Kojo Koram's recent book, Uncommon Wealth, Britain's colonial history continues to structure its relationship with former colonies and clients, including global Muslim populations in the Indian subcontinent, Middle East and North Africa, in a manner that was extractive, dehumanising, and exploitative (Koram 2022). During the break-up of Britain's formal imperial structures, the struggle to preserve economic interests with the loss of political control, encapsulated by the history of companies like BP (previously the Anglo-Persian Oil Company), had a particular impact on the Muslim world. This history provides an important contrast with Germany, owing to how the UK lacks a »culture of remembrance« (Erinnerungskultur) in relation to its history of imperialism. In the context of the Nazi's particularly extreme genocidal crimes and total military defeat in the Second World War, Germany has undertaken some public discussion around racism, anti-Semitism, and »empire« (Reich). In comparison, the UK's imperial history remains subject to peculiar combinations of amnesia and nostalgia, which until recently (e.g. the impact of the Black Lives Matter movement) had not seen significant public recognition of the underlying racism and white supremacy that underpinned the British Empire.

The story of Islamophobia and anti-Muslim racism in the UK should not therefore start primarily with the far right. It reflects a longer history of discrimination among the political mainstream, one which marks all areas of public life and has been well documented. As in a number of other countries, the reaction to 9/11 particularly targeted Muslim communities. The war on terror was used to justify unlawful military intervention and bombing of Muslim-majority countries, resulting in high civilian death tolls, torture and war crimes committed against civilian populations. Particu-

larly in the case of the Iraq war, the intervention tied in with Britain's historic relationship of oil extraction within the region. Domestically, UK Muslims were portrayed by elites as an enemy within, targeted by hema and husa discourse and securitised houser-terror policies, creating a febrile political environment. The continued dehumanisation of Muslim communities undermined the rule of law and human rights system. In the 2010s, far-right radicalisation would build on the discourses and practices seen in this earlier public policy phase.

The underlying narrative is one of threat to the integrity of white British culture and fears of replacement of the white population by racialised migrants and »Islamisation«. Many (but not all) of these views, expressed on mainstream platforms, went hand-in-hand with support for Brexit.

Moral panics about migration and Islam were instrumentalised by leading figures of the Leave campaign. The most extreme attacks came from the far right of the political spectrum, but they succeeded in influencing the right and centre-right. Islamophobia-driven anti-migrant hatred became a key component of how Conservative party politicians, including those who voted Remain, sought political legitimacy. But it is important to also recognise that politicians and commentators associated with the Labour Party have also promoted Islamophobic tropes.

The Conservative party instrumentalised Islamophobic stereotypes in support of Tory candidate Zac Goldsmith's London mayoral campaign against Labour's Sadiq Khan. Attacks were made on Khan's Muslim Pakistani heritage to correlate his candidacy with terrorism, Islamisation and destruction of white British identity in London. While the campaign ultimately failed, receiving much criticism for its racialisation of the mayoral election, it illustrates the wider global trend towards the demonisation of Muslims as a means of securing electoral support.

Now, as the Brexit project is implemented, Muslims and migrants continue to be scapegoated by the media and politicians. The endless stream of dehumanising rhetoric has most recently culminated in the petrol-bombing of an asylum-seeker processing centre in Kent used to house refugees who are mostly from Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq. The attacker's final tweet before the violent assault on the

centre read, »Your children will feel the pain we will obliterate them / Muslim children are now our target / And there [sic] disgusting women will be targeted mothers and sisters Is burn alive [sic] « (Hope not Hate – Right Response Team, 2022). The Home Secretary Suella Braverman's response to the incident was to fan the flames of racism further, describing the arrival of asylum seekers in the UK as an »invasion « (Sandford 2022).

### Defining Islamophobia or anti-Muslim hatred

In the UK context, the use of the term Islamophobia remains the accepted lexicon with which to discuss anti-Muslim racism. However, there has been significant policy discussion over how it should be defined and understood. In 2018, the UK All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on British Muslims published a report titled *Islamophobia Defined:* the inquiry into a working definition of Islamophobia (APPG on British Muslims 2018).

The report put forward the following definition of Islamophobia:

»Islamophobia is rooted in racism and is a type of racism that targets expressions of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness.«

The report argued that contemporary examples of Islamophobia in public life, the media, schools, the workplace, and in encounters between religions and non-religions in the public sphere could, taking into account the overall context, include, but are not limited to:

- Calling for, aiding, instigating or justifying the killing or harming of Muslims in the name of a racist/fascist ideology, or an extremist view of religion.
- Making mendacious, dehumanising, demonising, or stereotypical allegations about Muslims as such, or of Muslims as a collective group, such as, especially but not exclusively, conspiracies about Muslim entryism in politics, government or other societal institutions; the myth of Muslim identity having a unique propensity for terrorism; and claims of a demographic »threat« posed by Muslims or of a »Muslim takeover«.
- Accusing Muslims as a group of being responsible for real or imagined wrongdoing committed by a single Muslim person or group of Muslim individuals, or even for acts committed by non-Muslims.
- Accusing Muslims as a group, or Muslim majority states, of inventing or exaggerating Islamophobia, ethnic cleansing, or genocide perpetrated against Muslims.
- Accusing Muslim citizens of being more loyal to the »Ummah« (transnational Muslim community) or to their countries of origin, or to the alleged priorities

- of Muslims worldwide, than to the interests of the nations they live in.
- Denying Muslim populations the right to selfdetermination, e.g. by claiming that the existence of an independent Palestine or Kashmir is a terrorist endeayour.
- Applying double standards by requiring of Muslims behaviours that are not expected or demanded of any other groups in society, e.g. loyalty tests.
- Using the symbols and images associated with classic Islamophobia (e.g. Muhammed being a paedophile, claims of Muslims spreading Islam by the sword or subjugating minority groups under their rule) to characterise Muslims as being 'sex groomers', inherently violent or incapable of living harmoniously in plural societies.
- Holding Muslims collectively responsible for the actions of any Muslim majority state, whether secular or constitutionally Islamic.

The Conservative Party has not subscribed to this definition, but it has been adopted by most other UK political parties including Labour, all the Scottish parties, and the Mayor of London.

# Brexit and the 2015–2016 migrant »crisis«

As in Germany, the UK's experience of the 2015 to 2016 migration »crisis« witnessed a close relationship and interplay between Islamophobia and anti-migrant hostility. However, this response had already been prepared over previous years. An important factor in the rise of this sentiment was the growing electoral success of UKIP, particularly in the 2014 European Parliament election.

On numerous and thoroughly documented occasions (see Willits 2015) UKIP members and electoral candidates publicly expressed vicious anti-Muslim views. For instance, in 2014, a UKIP council candidate was suspended for a tweet stating that Pakistan should be »nuked«, that David Cameron was a »gay-loving nutcase«, Muslims were »devil's kids« and homosexuality was an »abomination before god«. The candidate also tweeted that »Islam is evil« (BBC News 2014).

In 2014, Nigel Farage, then UKIP leader, stereotyped the Muslim population as inherently anti-Semitic, blaming »Muslims« for »a sharp rise in anti-Semitism« in Britain and across Europe (the JC 2014). As noted in the foregoing, a similar strategy has been used by the German far right to encourage a »divide and rule« logic and dynamic among minoritised communities.

In a bid to stem UKIP's electoral success and pacify Eurosceptics in his own party, David Cameron promised a referen-

dum on EU membership if the Conservatives won the 2014 general election. He delivered on this promise, after which UKIP joined the Leave.EU alliance, ramping up its campaigns against migrants and Muslims to create a climate of fear in the lead-up to the referendum.

In a 2015 speech to the European Parliament, Farage said Muslims were »a fifth column« that were »utterly opposed to our values«, urging MEPs »to be a lot braver and a lot more courageous in standing up for our Judeo-Christian culture« (Farage 2015a). A few months later, Farage was reported in the mainstream media as having said that a »rapid implementation of a common EU migration and asylum policy« would be »wholly unacceptable to a United Kingdom that already has levels of immigration that are too high, and as Isis have previously threatened, could lead to half a million Islamic extremists coming to our countries and posing a direct threat to our civilisation« (Mason 2015a). In this extract, Farage does not attempt to disguise his equivalence between Muslims, migrants, terrorists and extremists; they are all grouped together in one sweeping racist generalisation.

In a speech in Basingstoke at the end of 2015, Farage repeated the notion that Muslims were »conflicted in their loyalties«, and again linked EU membership to the threat of Islamic extremism. Using the language of war, he stated that the »conflict with the UK Muslim population suggests that there is all to play for and we can win the battle of hearts and minds«, that the European Union was »seriously imperilling our security« because of the risk of terrorists posing as migrants; and that the EU's principle of free movement of workers had resulted in the »free movement of Kalashnikov rifles, the free movement of terrorists and the free movement of jihadists«, concluding that »we must not let our compassion imperil our civilisation« (Mason 2015b).

Anti-Muslim hatred was therefore a clear and commonly expressed theme in Farage's campaign to leave the European Union. His now infamous »Breaking Point« poster depicted thousands of people of colour, mainly men, as a threat on the borders of the country. Outside the party, commentators and outriders amplified Farage's message in the mainstream media. *Telegraph* columnist Allison Pearson tweeted, »Brussels, de facto capital of the EU, is also the jihadist capital of Europe. And the Remainers dare to say we're safer in the EU! #Brexit« (Pearson 2016).

The official Brexit referendum campaign, Vote Leave, led by Dominic Cummings, and with various high-profile Conservative MPs among its supporters including Michael Gove and Boris Johnson, presented itself as the more respectable outfit in explicit contrast to Farage's Leave.EU. However, one of its central »warnings« throughout the referendum campaign was that Turkey and Albania, two majority Muslim countries, would soon be joining the EU's freedom of movement area.

Michael Gove, for example, wrote a piece for the *Daily Mail* at the end of April 2016 which equated Albanian immi-

grants with organised crime groups and said that »The EU is planning not just to give visa-free travel to 77 million Turks, but also to absorb this Muslim state into the EU« (Gove 2016). In short, Gove did not attempt to hide the fact that it was the Muslim character of the country he held to be a problem. Despite distancing himself from Farage's »Breaking Point« poster the argument was effectively identical: a wave of Muslim immigrants represented a threat to Britain.

# Islamophobia in the UK media ecosystem

UKIP supporter Katie Hopkins (who was nevertheless judged too extreme to be allowed to join the party at the time) pushed this messaging even further to the far right. Initially gaining celebrity on UK TV show *The Apprentice*, with her chauvinistic views on women's rights, Islam, and migration, she was given a regular platform across Britain's print and broadcast media in *The Sun, Daily Mail* and on LBC. These platforms were used to build her social media profile where she continued to post Islamophobic and extreme views, gaining considerable international reach.

In April 2015, in an article for *The Sun* Hopkins called for »coffins«, »bodies floating on water« and »gunships« to send migrants, whom she described as »cockroaches«, back to their countries in »Libya« and »Africa« (Hopkins 2015). She calls for »Kalashnikovs« to be used and holes to be drilled into boats carrying migrants. In the same article she references »sharia-stoning« and says British towns are »plagued by swarms of migrants and asylum seekers« (ibid).

A few months later, Prime Minister David Cameron then used the same word as Katie Hopkins (»swarm«) to describe asylum seekers, saying »You've got a swarm of people coming across the Mediterranean« on a live TV broadcast on ITV News that was reported across the mainstream media (World News 2015).

Prime Minister David Cameron then continued to specifically target the British Muslim community, portraying Muslims as outsiders who had failed to integrate. In print and broadcast media, he specifically singled out Muslim women as having poor English, linking this to the rise of ISIS and extremism, and threatening Muslim women who did not improve their English fluency with deportation (Cameron 2016a).

It is clear from the above quotes that the migrants and refugees specifically targeted by Hopkins, Farage, and Cameron were not white Europeans but refugees fleeing war-torn countries across the Mediterranean with Muslim-majority populations. The comments analysed from this period all contained a lexicon that explicitly or implicitly targeted Muslim migrants, associating them with terrorism and using dehumanising and often violent language to describe them.

### **Government policy**

Going alongside this violent discourse has been a sustained shift in government policy, especially with regard to the securitisation of the migration issue. Katie Hopkins said in 2015 that she wanted »gunships« threatening migrants »with violence until they bugger off« (Hopkins 2015). The Home Office has since attempted to implement more and more militarisation of the border force, including illegal pushbacks and even mooting use of LRADS (devices that create a sound so loud it induces vomiting in those who hear it).

In February 2019, the Conservative government used a »removal of citizenship order« to strip Shamima Begum, a UK-born teenager, of UK citizenship, arguing she had the right to citizenship in Bangladesh, despite her never having been to Bangladesh and Bangladesh refusing to accept her. The power to strip citizenship of any UK-born citizen with eligibility for citizenship in another country, without notice or appeal, if the Home Secretary deems it is for the »public good«, was then written into the 2021 Nationality and Borders Act. These policies intentionally target Muslims and other minoritised communities as »extremist threats«, denying their basic human right to citizenship and statehood.

An important contrast should be recognised, in this regard, between the UK and Germany. Not only did the latter provide sanctuary to some 800,000 refugees, vastly exceeding the UK's record, but the trend in German policy has been moving in broadly the opposite direction to the UK. The UK started the post-WW2 era with a relatively open conception of citizenship, with subjects of the British Empire and dominions having a normal right to freedom of movement to the UK and over time added restrictions; for example, the British Nationality Act 1981 removed the right to national citizenship by birth registration, requiring children of non-UK nationals to apply via the »naturalisation« route (Goodfellow 2019; Yeo 2017). In contrast, over time Germany has taken modest steps to move away from a more restrictive and ethnic conception of national citizenship.

#### **Attacks on Muslim politicians**

The Islamophobic rhetoric mobilised around the migration »crisis« was replicated in far-right and mainstream campaigning during the London mayoral election of 2016.

Conservative mayoral candidate Zac Goldsmith launched his campaign manifesto by alleging that Labour's candidate Sadiq Khan, a Muslim, "provided cover for extremists" and had "given platforms, oxygen and even cover — over and over and over again — to those who seek to do our police and capital harm". Goldsmith also stated that Khan was "a man who has tried to silence questions about his links by shamelessly accusing anyone who raises them of being Islamophobic" (Ramesh 2016).

A few days later David Cameron repeated similar dog-whistle smears associating Sadiq Khan with Islamic extremism in Parliament (Cameron 2016b). In a concerted campaign, these statements were immediately followed by Zac Goldsmith's team releasing a »dossier« of Khan's clients during his career as a human rights lawyer in order to allege links with convicted terrorists, homophobes, anti-Semites and hate preachers.

The smearing of Sadiq Khan as an extremist threat is an example of conscious and unrepentant Islamophobia. It is no surprise, therefore, that Zac Goldsmith doubled down on his position when Labour formally adopted the APPG definition, tweeting »If you ask supporters of Islamism to write up a definition of vislamophobia«, you can't be surprised if they craft it to insulate themselves from scrutiny. Criticising MEND, CAGE etc. then becomes vislamophobia«. MPs should never have signed this off« (Goldsmith 2019).

Goldsmith's campaign against Khan also targeted Jewish and Hindu voters in London with customised flyers that intended to play off different minoritised communities against each other, implying that Khan's Muslim background meant he was unable to represent the interests of Hindu and Jewish voters and was instead inimical to them. This »divide-and-rule« tactic is commonly used by far-right and mainstream Islamophobes.

Goldsmith's Islamophobic campaign failed miserably and Khan was elected with an overwhelming mandate, suggesting that this type of racialised campaign does not gain traction in more diverse, urban areas. However, Conservative MPs continue to launch identity-based attacks on Khan. For instance, on 13 March 2018, Conservative MP Nadine Dorries quote-tweeted a video on tackling Islamophobia released by Sadiq Khan, commenting "How about, sit's time to act on sex abusing grooming gangs, instead? #TelfordGrooming #Rotherham #Priorities #leadership" (Dorries 2018). Not only does Rotherham fall outside of Sadiq Khan's geographical remit, but smearing Muslims as paedophiles and rapists is a classic tactic of the far right.

Sadiq Khan's tenure at the London mayoralty has become a key reference point for this rising Islamophobic discourse. Katie Hopkins now often name drops Khan to expound her view that London has become »Londonistan«, is overpopulated by Muslims and minorities, and that »white European« values and culture are under threat in a Europe-wide civilisational war. The comments section on Boris Johnson's appearance on LBC as Prime Minister to discuss his own past Islamophobic comments was overflowing with Islamophobic references to Sadiq Khan.

#### **Labour Party Islamophobia**

Islamophobic attacks on politicians have not been limited to Conservative Party campaigns. Labour MP Apsana Begum, the first and only MP to wear a headscarf, faced criminal charges and a court trial initiated by her own Labour council (alleging housing benefit fraud) as well as a vicious deselection process from her own constituency Labour Party in the context of having suffered domestic violence and ongoing abuse from her ex-partner, a Labour councillor,

who was directly involved in the attacks against her. The court found her not guilty (see Kale 2021).

In 2017, Labour MP Sarah Champion (then Shadow Minister for Women and Equalities) repeated far-right discourse linking Muslims to sex abuse, paedophilia and grooming gangs in an inflammatory article published in *The Sun* (Champion 2017). She did at least face some consequences for this, as she was forced to resign her position from the Shadow Cabinet.

Labour member and public figure Trevor Phillips, former head of the Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), has published comments in the *Times, Telegraph* and the *Sun* attacking Muslims as being »a nation within a nation«, having »different values« from the rest of »us« and again linking Pakistanis and Muslims to grooming gangs and child abuse. His Labour Party membership was temporarily suspended, but no further disciplinary action was taken and he has since been reinstated. The recently published Forde Report also evidences many instances of Islamophobia and other forms of racism in the Labour Party, but no action has been taken on the report.

#### Attacks on Muslim women's dress

Boris Johnson refused to apologise for comments published in the *Telegraph* in 2018 ridiculing Muslim women who chose to wear the burqa and niqaab while he was a backbench MP. His dehumanising comments compared Muslim women to »bank robbers« and »letterboxes« and described their choice of dress as »absolutely ridiculous« (Johnson 2018).

His comments were picked up by Tory MP Nadine Dorries, who stated in a broadcast media interview that Johnson's article didn't go far enough and she was disappointed that he hadn't called for an "outright ban" on a "medieval dress code" designed to cover up "bruises" (Daily Sabah 2021). She stereotyped all Muslim women who wear the burqa and niqaab as victims of domestic abuse and went on to say that these women were not allowed to "choose who they marry" or even "keep their genitals", falsely conflating the practice of FGM with the Muslim community as a whole (ibid).

She also put the criticism of Boris Johnson down to his support for Brexit. She said, »There are people in Westminster that are actually terrified that at some stage... Boris may make a challenge for the leadership and the position at no.10, and those people of course are all going to come out, particularly those on the remain side of the Brexit argument, and attack him in force« (ibid).

Nadine Dorries has repeatedly called for a ban on the burqa and has also shared far-right articles attacking Muslims on social media. Once Johnson became Prime Minister, he promoted her to Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport. While the UK remains relatively liberal, compared to some other countries, on freedom of religion and freedom

of dress, there has long been support for a »clamp down« and ban from this right-wing and authoritarian section of the Conservatives.

# Internationalisation of Islamophobic discourse

There has long been a concerted campaign to internationalise Islamophobia. Many far-right and authoritarian figures have been quick to realise they have a number of allies for their agenda globally, and have taken advantage of the internet as an organising resource to create common networks of propaganda and influence. American President Donald Trump not only retweeted Katie Hopkins on multiple occasions, he also shared three videos of the fringe far-right party, Britain First. Even his close ally at the time, British Prime Minister Theresa May, condemned the tweets.

Ties with India's far-right Prime Minister Narendra Modi and support for his violently Islamophobic party (the BJP) have long been forged with UK politicians; arguably this is more serious than Trump's link to the British far right, because they extend into very mainstream parts of the political spectrum, including not only the Conservatives but also the Labour party. David Cameron welcomed Modi to huge crowds at Wembley Stadium during his premiership, and Labour MP Keith Vaz heralded the visit in entirely positive terms as »truly historic«. The BJP is a formal affiliate of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), a paramilitary organisation that was originally inspired by Italian fascism. For decades, this paramilitary wing has been mobilising on the streets of India in assertion of the »Hindutva« ideology, which seeks to turn India, the country with one of the world's largest Muslim populations, into a Hindu-dominated nation pursuing a form of apartheid.

Katie Hopkins lost most of her mainstream media platforms in the UK after she tweeted that a »final solution« was needed for the Muslim problem (Topping 2017). She now has a platform with the Indian media that she has used to condemn the »Islamification of the UK« and praise Modi's military shutdown in Kashmir, which included suspending its autonomous self-governing constitutional status, as »fantastic« (India Today 2019). There has now been an attempt to export this movement to the UK, with clashes being engineered in the city of Leicester. UK far-right figure Tommy Robinson has used recent events in Leicester to seek »unity« between English and Hindu fascist movements in the UK. This alliance presents a real and dangerous step change in the dynamics of Islamophobia as it manifests in the UK, as the far right attempts to mount BJP-style street mobilisations against Muslims.

#### Conclusion

This research provides a monitoring resource for the evolution of Islamophobic rhetoric from politicians, demonstrating the trend towards convergence of radical right with mainstream discourses. It depicts a concerning landscape for Islamophobia in the UK. The stereotyping of Muslims as

terrorists and extremists has fed into dangerous government decisions and policy that have targeted and stripped Muslims of basic rights, including in the case of Shamima Begum summarily stripping a British national of citizenship rights.

This rhetoric goes hand-in-hand with draconian government policy towards migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. This policy is characterised by brutal state violence, the flouting of international law, and the denial of basic human rights. Policy and public discourse became more aggressive in the context of Brexit, and now, as the Brexit project unfolds, its promises of harsher treatment and demonisation of migrants and Muslims continues to bear fruit in government policy.

Many of these issues resonate with the evidence documented from Germany in the sense that the convergence between the far right and centre-right picks up on similar issues related to an (explicitly or implicitly) ethnic conception of national identity; a belief that »Islamization« is occurring in Europe that threatens its laws and traditions; and a close correlation between hostility to non-white immigration and Islamophobic tropes and attitudes. While both countries have seen the flowering of civil society and social movement contestation of these ideas and policies, in Germany the political environment has proven to be more favourable to anti-racist positions, not only in the formation of a government supportive of human rights and inclusive policy but also the relative strength of anti-racist and anti-fascist sentiment within the centre right CDU. Despite these positives, policies to support the integration and representation of Muslims in public life and tackle structural racism need to be built up.

There is much more work to do, but concerted efforts from campaign groups, politicians and stakeholders across society can challenge rampant Islamophobia. In documenting the problem across two European contexts, we hope that this report can be a small contribution towards internationalising that effort.

### 3

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

How should we respond to the threat Islamophobia poses to human rights and democracy?

Resources and support must be channelled towards Muslim communities to lead anti-racist community organising and campaigning. Grassroots organisations and political parties need to dedicate resources to increasing participation and representation from Muslim communities within their organisations. Similarly, resources and training should be channelled towards increasing Muslim representation and visibility within the media and civil society.

Politicians and public figures need to push back against antimigrant sentiment and articulate a vision of society that includes all communities. Research and monitoring of instances of anti-Muslim racism needs to continue and be stepped up where possible.

#### **Germany**

- All forms of hatred and discrimination must be countered. The 2022 coup attempt by the far-right Patriotic Union is the latest example of concern regarding links between the security services and the extreme right (recalling the National Socialist Underground campaign of atrocities in the 2000s). Reform of security sector governance, including strengthening civilian oversight and the monitoring function for civil society, needs to acknowledge and address these dangers.
- Pressure must be mobilised and exerted on conservative politicians against any form of cooperation with the AfD, especially on state and local level where the cordon sanitaire looks weaker.
- Around 1 in 4 people in Germany now have some form of immigrant background or heritage.
  Progressive messaging scarcely addresses this growing demographic. This must change.
- The structural exclusion of migrants is a problem for Germany's democracy. Almost 7 million people, about 10 per cent of the adult population, live and work in Germany but cannot vote. Campaigns for example for municipal voting rights as a first step

towards more participation need to be at the heart of progressive politics going forward.

- Migrant-led initiatives were central to recent pushes for unionisation in gig-economy start-ups and strikes in Amazon warehouses. These are vital and must be supported.
- The far right succeeded in pushing their framing of Muslims = »bad migrants« in the aftermath of 2015–2016. Progressives must resist this framing. Progressive politics on migration must support universalism and human rights.
- Foreign policy is back on the agenda. But while there has been significant public solidarity with the Iranian democratic revolt, there's little debate, let alone outrage for the atrocities committed by Germany's partner Turkey in relation to Kurdish human rights and autonomy, or in its »demographic engineering« policy of resettling refugees in Turkish-occupied Northern Syria. A progressive foreign policy needs to start with supporting human rights as the basis for international solidarity across borders.

#### UK

- Political parties should adopt the APPG definition of Islamophobia and campaign for official government adoption of the definition. Education and awareness about anti-Muslim hatred and how it manifests should be prioritised.
- Progressive and left parties should call for equal treatment of refugees and asylum seekers from Muslim-majority countries.
- All attacks on Muslim dress should be resisted with an emphasis on basic human rights and freedom of expression.
- Promote education and awareness about the UK's history of colonialism and empire in Muslim majority countries. Understanding of the exploitative economic relationship should be in the national curriculum.

- Any links and associations with the far-right BJP and Hindutva movement should be cut and those who continue and normalise such links should be vocally criticised.
- Develop international campaigns of solidarity with the Muslim community against far-right attacks.

The far right is organising internationally to build a globally connected movement of ethno-nationalists that share Muslim communities as a common target.

The left and progressive response must also be international. Building a broad movement where minoritised and racialised groups are fully represented from the grassroots to the leadership is the necessary response to the normalisation of anti-Muslim hate.

Our response is not simply in solidarity with Muslim communities; it must be enacted hand-in-hand and by Muslims themselves. In the fight against Islamophobia, which seeks to deny basic rights and citizenship to Muslims, the community itself must take space, power and agency.

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### MAINSTREAM AND FAR RIGHT ISLAMOPHOBIA

### A UK-Germany comparison



TThe so-called »migration crisis« of 2015 was a key accelerator for the far right in Germany and the UK. In Germany, the AfD instrumentalised it to effectively transform itself into a major force in national politics overnight, becoming the leading party in many former East German states. Compared to the relatively welcoming approach to Ukrainian refugees, public discussion around migration involves an implicit equivalence between the category of the »undesirable migrant« and the »Muslim«. Similarly, the UK experience of the migration »crisis« witnessed a close interplay between Islamophobia and anti-migrant hostility. However, this response had already been prepared over previous years. An important factor in the rise of this sentiment was the growing electoral success of UKIP, particularly in the 2014 European Parliament election.



Anti-Muslim hatred was a clear and commonly expressed theme in Farage's campaign to leave the European Union. The official Brexit referendum campaign, Vote Leave, led by Dominic Cummings, presented itself as the more respectable outfit in explicit contrast to Farage's campaign. However, one of its central »warnings« throughout the referendum campaign was that Turkey and Albania, two majority Muslim countries, would soon be joining the EU's freedom of movement area. Despite distancing himself from Farage's »Breaking Point« poster the argument was effectively identical: a wave of Muslim immigrants represented a threat to Britain.



Resources and support must be channelled towards Muslim communities to lead anti-racist community organising and campaigning. Grassroots organisations and political parties need to dedicate resources to increasing participation and representation from Muslim communities within their organisations. Similarly, resources and training should be channelled towards increasing Muslim representation and visibility within the media and civil society.

Further information on the topic can be found here: https://uk.fes.de

