

Summary of MEND's Muslim Manifesto (General Election 2017)



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Executive Summary

This manifesto serves to highlight some of the major issues that are facing British Muslim communities. Many of these issues that British Muslims face have frequently been shown to be further compounded by issues of race, ethnicity and/or gender.

The key policy concerns that we have highlighted throughout this manifesto are:

- **Islamophobia and Racial/Religious Equality:** We have drawn attention to the pervasive character of Islamophobia amongst certain elements within the UK and argue for the immediate need to tackle inadequate legislation on racial and religious hate crime. While there is a severe lack of legislation protecting Muslims from instances of Islamophobia, the Government has shown an increased willingness to understand hate crime in the past year. This is commendable, but not enough. We call on Parliament to properly investigate anti-Muslim prejudice in the UK and undertake all necessary steps to tackle this abuse with a view to building a fairer and more compassionate society for all.
- **Youth and Education:** In terms of youth and education, the Muslim population in Britain is increasingly made up of young people – according to the 2011 census, 33% of Muslims in Britain are aged 15 or under. They continue to face significant disadvantages as 46% of Muslims live in the 10% most deprived districts in England and Wales. BME students, including Muslims, are also less likely to have parents in higher management careers, go on to ‘elite’ universities or gain first-class degrees. This is despite the fact that Muslim pupils routinely achieve high exam results at school and Muslim schools often reach high positions in national league tables. As such, political parties must commit to developing teaching materials to educate young people on Islamophobia, racism, and antisemitism, as well as funding projects that promote educational programmes on inter-faith awareness.
- **Employment:** Muslims experience a significant level of disadvantage in the labour market. They are discriminated against during the recruitment process, as well as in the workplace environment, and are frequently victims of frustrated ambitions as they are under-represented in the higher positions within their professions. This is in addition to suffering from significantly high unemployment rates as well as noticeable pay gaps, when compared to their Christian counterparts. Considering the young demographic age of the British Muslim population and this age group’s additional obstacles to the labour market, the UK as a whole is failing to benefit from the creative and innovative dynamism and potential that accompanies this young population. As such, we maintain that there is a desperate need to address religious discrimination in the workplace and tackle the low level of economic activity among Muslims through targeted interventions at all stages of recruitment, retention and promotion. In particular, political parties need to focus on improving access to employment for British Muslim and BME women.
- **Integration and Community Cohesion:** The overwhelmingly negative portrayal of Muslims within the media is detrimental to any integration strategy based on creating and maintaining “common ground”. Furthermore, such negative misrepresentation is incredibly harmful to social cohesion by fuelling stereotypes through irresponsible and sensationalist reporting. Consequently, the Leveson recommendations must be fully implemented. Furthermore, there needs to be support for industry initiatives that promote positive, diverse representations of Muslims and minorities in the mainstream media.

- **Minority Rights:** This manifesto outlines the policy issues pertaining to minority rights and the right to freedom of religion - and religious practice particularly - that dominate public debate. This includes Muslim women's dress, animal slaughter, the right to religious practice, and the accommodation of minority culture. While these issues are constantly topics of debate, these discussions are rarely conducted in a productive manner and are often infiltrated by anti-Muslim sentiment. Political parties engaging in such debates must be mindful of the distress that is caused by insensitive representation and handling of these issues. Furthermore, we call on these parties to preserve the Human Rights Act and protect minority rights, including rights to religious slaughter, circumcision and wearing of religious dress or symbols.
- **Counter-terrorism and Civil Liberties:** The Government has continued to implement counter-terrorism legislation which disproportionately impacts Muslim communities, with the statutory Prevent duty having a particularly detrimental impact on young British Muslims. The protection of civil liberties has taken a regressive step with the recent introduction of the 'Snooper's Charter', giving the security services and other public bodies extensive powers to mine citizens' electronic records. In light of this continued situation and the huge amount of evidence demonstrating the counter-productive nature of much of this legislation, we call on political parties to commit to curbing the encroachment of counter-terrorism policies on civil liberties by reviewing all counter-terrorism legislation enacted since 2000. Furthermore, it is essential that all future strategies are geared towards fostering social cohesion and community resilience to all forms of extremism, as well as supporting de-radicalisation programmes that work with Muslim communities and not against them.
- **Crime and Policing:** The disproportionate use of stop and search and Schedule 7 powers on minority communities continues to leave its impact. Although welcome steps have been made in both areas, further work is required to ensure racial and religious stereotyping is prevented. While representation of minority communities within the police force has improved, focus on tackling the continuing growth in Muslim prisoner numbers is urgently needed.
- **International Affairs and Human Rights Promotion Abroad:** Regarding Britain's foreign and international policy Muslim countries have regrettably consistently been in the spotlight since 2001. The invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan continue to have resonance, as do the allegations of abuse and ill-treatment against citizens of those countries at the hands of the British Armed Forces. These revelations have been accompanied by Government Inquiries into the kidnapping and rendering of terrorist suspects by the Secret Intelligence Service and the Security Services. Developments since 2015 also include the rise in hate crimes against Muslims in the aftermath of the vote to leave the European Union ('Brexit'), as well as the attempts by new US President Donald Trump to ban people from a number of Muslim countries from entering the USA. It is to be hoped that the next government will learn from Britain's recent military mistakes in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya and the impact these have on domestic affairs, and will work instead with international institutions to peacefully promote the rule of law and the spread of human rights. Moreover, Britain has a responsibility as one of the major world powers to speak out against injustices, be they in the occupied Palestinian territories or places like Burma or Yemen.

It is imperative that political parties actively engage with these issues and with Muslim communities themselves in a positive and constructive manner. Furthermore, the politics of hatred and division that have characterised political discourse both during and since the 2016 referendum cannot be allowed to continue. Therefore, we call on all political parties to adopt the recommendations as policy commitments, in order to address these critical issues within their policy development and implementation strategies.

Policy Pledges



Commit to proactively engage with a broad and representative spectrum of the British Muslim community.



Commit to a review of the 2006 Racial and Religious Hatred Act as advised by the Law Commission's "Hate crime: the case for extending the existing offences" report and introduce legislation to extend legal protection to cover religion, homophobia and disability hate crime.



Commit to (a) working with social media companies to protect free speech while developing an efficient strategy to tackle hate speech online (b) consider primary legislation to deal with social media offences and hate speech online.



Commit to developing teaching materials to educate young people on Islamophobia, racism, and antisemitism; to prioritise religious education in the national curriculum to prepare young people for life in a religiously plural society.



Commit to supporting faith school provisions in the state sector for Muslim pupils and parents; support 'twinning' of faith and non-faith schools to encourage cultural exchange between pupils of different racial, religious, ethnic and other backgrounds.



Commit to tackling religious discrimination in the workplace and address the low level of economic activity among Muslims through targeted interventions at stages of recruitment, retention and promotion; improving access to employment for British Muslim women.



Commit to media reform and the full implementation of the Royal Charter on a Leveson compliant regulator; support industry initiatives to promote positive, diverse representations of Muslims and minorities in the mainstream media.



Commit to improving ethnic diversity in all sectors of business, politics and media through schemes encouraging BME recruitment, mentoring and promotion.



Commit to supporting the growth of the shari'ah compliant financial services industry and providing shari'ah compliant student loans for British Muslim students.

Commit to preserving the Human Rights Act and the protection of minority rights including rights to religious slaughter, circumcision and wearing of religious dress or symbols.

Commit to fostering social cohesion and community resilience to all forms of extremism; support de-radicalisation programmes that work with Muslim communities not against them.

Commit to repealing the current statutory Prevent duty, and replacing this with a more effective, evidence based and non-discriminatory counter-terrorism strategy by engaging with Muslim communities.

Commit to curbing the encroachment of counter-terrorism policies on civil liberties by reviewing all counter-terrorism legislation enacted since 2000.

Commit to tackling the high number of Muslim prisoners through schemes to facilitate rehabilitation, cut re-offending and develop pathways for social inclusion.

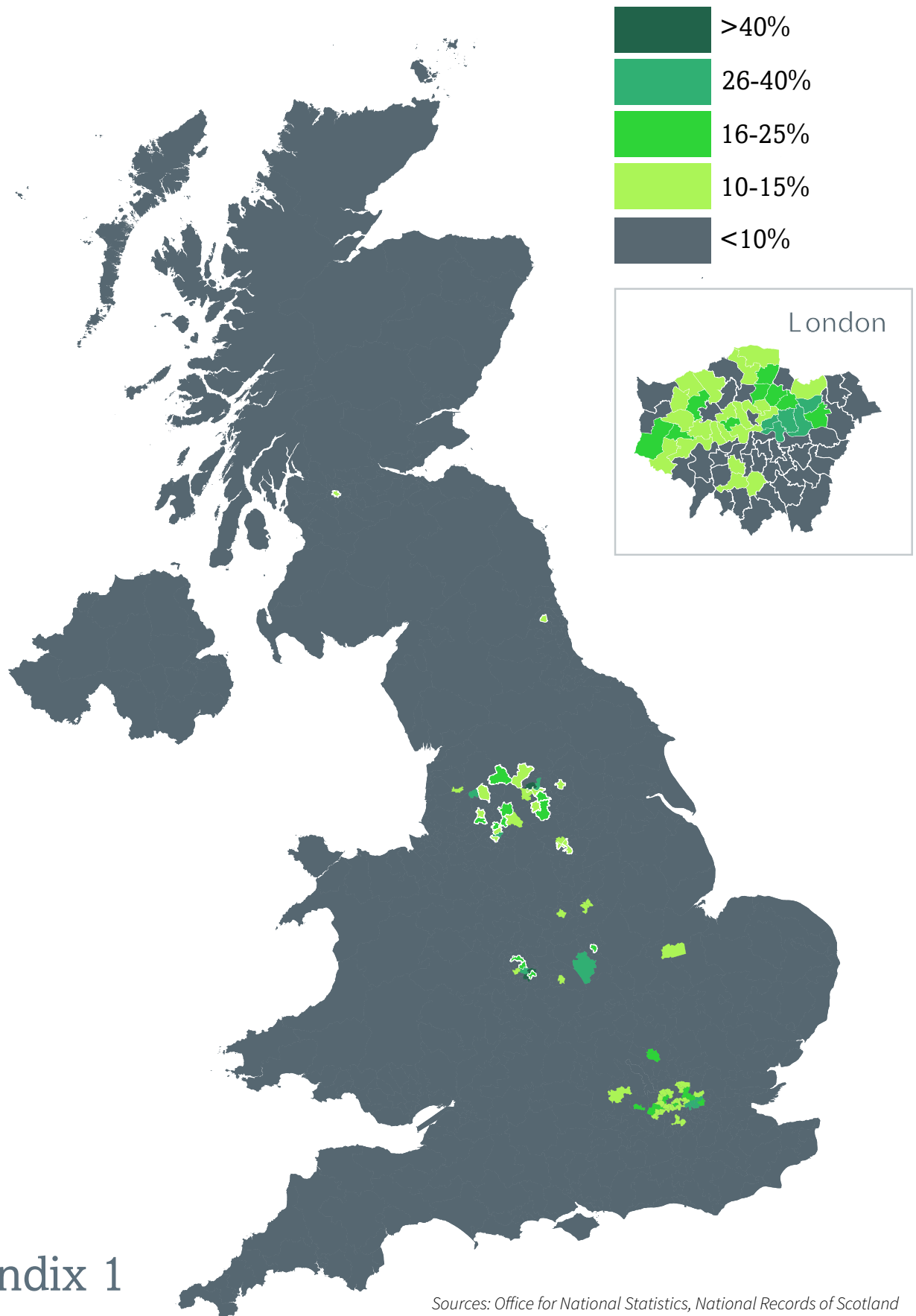
Commit to support the creation of an independent state of Palestine and the end to Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territories.

Commit to support the principles of the EU Equal Treatment Directive to advance protection against discrimination on the grounds of religion to education, healthcare, housing, access to goods and services and social protection, into UK law post-Brexit.

Commit to democracy and human rights promotion abroad, including the rights of religious minorities.



Muslim population density by parliamentary constituency



Appendix 1

Sources: Office for National Statistics, National Records of Scotland

Top 20 parliamentary constituencies by Muslim population density

Constituency	Population	Muslim population	Muslim population density
Bradford West	116,556	58,872	50.5%
Birmingham, Hodge Hill	127,751	63,417	49.6%
Birmingham, Hall Green	118,546	53,990	49.6%
Blackburn	107,221	38,887	36.3%
Bradford East	116,943	42,056	36.0%
East Ham	158,283	56,008	35.4%
Ilford South	141,102	45,757	32.4%
Birmingham, Ladywood	138,025	44,626	32.3%
Bethnal Green and Bow	141,267	44,409	31.4%
Poplar and Limehouse	153,969	43,287	28.1%
Manchester, Gorton	116,889	32,010	27.4%
Leicester South	122,724	33,152	27.0%
Walthamstow	115,849	28,207	24.3%
West Ham	174,534	42,448	24.3%
Oldham West and Royton	105,833	25,220	23.8%
Luton South	118,448	27,874	23.5%
Rochdale	109,009	25,429	23.3%
Edmonton	118,834	27,488	23.1%
Slough	139,210	31,942	22.9%
Birmingham, Perry Barr	109,312	24,268	22.2%

Sources: Office for National Statistics, National Records of Scotland

1. Constituency population data is based on Office for National Statistics' Parliamentary Constituency Mid-Year Population Estimates for 2015
2. Muslim population figures are based on data from Office for National Statistics' Census 2011 outputs



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