

COMBATTING ISLAMOPHOBIC HATE CRIME

*Position Paper from
Community Policy Forum*

October 2024

Introduction

The Home Office has released its annual hate crime [statistics](#) for April 2023 to March 2024, revealing a 25% rise in religiously aggravated offences, from 8,370 to 10,484 compared to the previous year. Hate crimes targeting Muslims increased by 13%, rising from 3,432 to 3,866, accounting for 38% of all religiously aggravated hate crimes – the highest proportion among any religious group in England and Wales. However, the government exclusively funds and supports Tell MAMA, which suffers from a lack of credibility within Muslim communities and ongoing issues with transparency, accountability, and effectiveness.

This position paper argues that the government should suspend funding to Tell MAMA and its parent organisation, Faith Matters, and instead develop a comprehensive strategy to address Islamophobic hate crime that includes engagement with grassroots organisations that have community credibility. Using a human rights-based framework, the paper underscores that such a strategy must prioritise accurate data collection and be informed by the lived experiences of Muslim communities to ensure a more effective response.

Approaching the Issues

An [investigation](#) by Nafeez Ahmed for Byline Times raises serious concerns about the transparency and efficacy of Tell MAMA, the UK's national anti-Muslim hate crime monitoring agency, which has received £7 million in government funding since 2012. Its parent organisation, Faith Matters, has not disclosed its non-government funders nor publicly accounted for the use of its government grants, prompting questions about financial transparency and accountability. During a House of Lords [debate](#) in May 2024 focused on hate crimes against Muslim women, Baroness Shaista Gohir questioned the government's continued support for Tell MAMA, asking: "When will [Tell MAMA's] funding be reviewed? [Tell MAMA] gets around £1 million a year, and no one knows what it does with this money. Why the lack of transparency?"

Further concerns arise from discrepancies in Tell MAMA's data. From 2017 to 2022, police in England and Wales [recorded](#) 19,146 anti-Muslim hate crimes, while Tell MAMA [reported](#) only 13,143 – a 32% difference. Considering police data already underestimates hate crimes, Tell MAMA is effectively [under-reporting](#) anti-Muslim hate crimes by over 90%. The organisation defends its figures by stating it doesn't actively seek out cases due to limited resources, arguing that a more aggressive approach would overwhelm its capacity and compromise data credibility. Yet, as Ahmed [highlights](#), "if Tell MAMA's national monitoring service was robust and useful, its figures would be expected to fill the gaps missed due to police under-reporting."

Current policymaking on Islamophobia lacks a comprehensive understanding of Islamophobic hate crimes, leading to inadequate preventative measures that leave communities vulnerable. The [far-right violence](#) earlier this year included assaults on Muslim bystanders, attacks on homes, businesses, and places of worship, as well as [arson attempts](#) on hotels housing Muslim asylum seekers. A [report](#) by the Muslim Women's Network UK, published in the aftermath of the violence, revealed that 67% of respondents had

experienced an Islamophobic hate incident in the past five years, with one in four suffering multiple incidents (five to ten) during that time. Alarming, 80% of those who experienced in-person hate incidents did not report them to the police, hate crime monitoring services, or helplines, which obscures the true extent of Islamophobia in the UK and in turn, undermines efforts to address the issue effectively.

Hate crimes violate several fundamental rights protected under the [Human Rights Act 1998](#) (HRA) and the [European Convention on Human Rights](#) (ECHR). Islamophobic hate crimes, such as arson attacks on mosques or violent assaults, directly threaten the right to life and security, breaching Article 2 (Right to Life). These attacks not only endanger individuals but also entire communities, creating a climate of fear. Victims of such crimes, along with their families, often suffer enduring psychological trauma and mental health issues, particularly when incidents involve extreme violence or abuse. This constitutes inhuman or degrading treatment, in violation of Article 3 of both the HRA and ECHR. Attacks on places of worship, religious symbols, or individuals because of their faith also violate the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion (Article 9), as they discourage individuals from practising their religion openly. Visibly Muslim women, especially those wearing the hijab, are disproportionately [targeted](#), further impinging on their rights to freedom and equality.

Recommendations

To address the prevalence of Islamophobic hate crime and tackle the under-reporting of incidents, we recommend:

- 1. Withdrawing funding for Tell MAMA:** As detailed in this paper, Tell MAMA has consistently provided inaccurate and unreliable data on anti-Muslim hate crimes, which exacerbates the gaps in hate crime reporting rather than addressing them. We recommend that the government cease funding Tell MAMA and redirect resources toward more credible and effective initiatives.
- 2. Reviewing the Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006:** We urge the government to review the Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006, specifically addressing the threshold disparity that limits its effectiveness in capturing Islamophobic abuse. The legislation must be revised to ensure it adequately covers the full spectrum of anti-Muslim hate, including subtle and overt forms.
- 3. Adopting the APPG definition of Islamophobia and accompanying CAI guidelines:** As recommended in our previous [position paper](#), the government should formally adopt the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on British Muslims' definition of Islamophobia. This definition, along with the explanatory [guidelines](#) produced by the Coalition Against Islamophobia (CAI), should serve as the cornerstone of a comprehensive national strategy to combat Islamophobia in all its forms.

Conclusion

The rise in Islamophobic hate crimes, compounded by inadequate data collection and ineffective monitoring by Tell MAMA, highlights significant flaws in the government's current approach to addressing Islamophobic hate crime. These issues undermine efforts to protect Muslim communities and infringe on core human rights, including the right to life, freedom from inhuman treatment, and freedom of religion. To address this, the government must implement a strategy grounded in Muslim communities' lived experiences and supported by accurate data, ensuring that Islamophobia is effectively addressed and Muslim communities in the UK are fully protected.



Community Policy
Forum

www.communitypolicyforum.com

@POLICYCOMMUNITY