

In Britain, That “Working Definition” Of “Islamophobia” Just Won’t Work

by Hugh Fitzgerald



There has been heated debate in Great Britain over the “working definition” of “Islamophobia” that has been presented for the government’s adoption by the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on British Muslims. The Independent describes the opposition of British police chiefs [here](#):

“Police leaders have raised concerns that a proposed definition of Islamophobia will undermine counter-terror operations and threaten freedom of speech.

“In a letter to the prime minister, the head of the National Police Chiefs’ Council (NPCC) said the change could

“undermine many elements of counterterrorism powers and policies” including port stops, bans on terrorist groups and propaganda, and the legal duty requiring schools, councils, and the NHS to report suspected extremism.

“NPCC chair Martin Hewitt said: “We take all reports of hate crime very seriously and will investigate them thoroughly; however, we have some concerns about the proposed definition of ‘Islamophobia’ made by the All-Party Parliamentary Group [APPG] on British Muslims.

“We are concerned that the definition is too broad as currently drafted, could cause confusion for officers enforcing it and could be used to challenge legitimate free speech on the historical or theological actions of Islamic states.

“There is also a risk it could also undermine counterterrorism powers, which seek to tackle extremism or prevent terrorism.

“It is important that any definition of anti-Muslim hostility is widely consulted on and has support across the Muslim community.”

“After a six-month inquiry taking evidence from Muslim organisations, legal experts, academics, MPs and other groups, the APPG called on the government to adopt the definition:

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

The indispensable word here, the word intended to elicit horror and guilt, and to shut down all criticism of Islam and of Muslims, is “racism.” It does not matter that Islam is not a race but a faith, as has been quietly, insistently,

repeatedly pointed out. Muslim groups pay no heed; they don't think they should be asked to explain exactly what they mean when they invoke that fright-word "racism." Nor do they explain that bizarre neologism "Muslimness."

"The definition was proposed in November and has since been adopted by the Labour Party, Liberal Democrats, Plaid Cymru and the London mayor's office.

"A government spokesperson said it would consider the change last year, but Theresa May is now expected to reject the definition. A minister is to attend a debate on the issue in the House of Commons on Thursday [May 16]..

"Assistant commissioner Neil Base, the head of UK counterterror policing, said police chiefs were not consulted by the APPG and want to see a definition that "satisfies all" while protecting hate crime victims.

"The definition of Islamophobia proposed by the APPG on British Muslims is simply too broad to be effective and it risks creating confusion, representing what some might see as legitimate criticism of the tenets of Islam – a religion – as a racist hate crime, which cannot be right for a liberal democracy in which free speech is also a core value," he said.

"As it stands, this definition risks shutting down debate about any interpretation of the tenets of Islam which are at odds with our laws and customs, which in turn would place our police officers and members of the judicial system in an untenable position.

"Despite the fact it would be non-legally binding, it would potentially allow those investigated by police and the security services for promoting extremism, hate and terrorism to legally challenge any investigation and potentially undermine many elements of counterterrorism powers and policies on the basis that they are 'Islamophobic'. That

cannot be allowed to happen.”

“The Independent understands that police chiefs had hoped to discuss concerns over the definition behind closed doors, and intended the letter to the prime minister to be private before it was leaked to The Times.

“The APPG’s report said the lack of an official definition was hampering efforts to counter Islamophobia, harming Muslims and wider British society.

“The aim of establishing a working definition of Islamophobia has neither been motivated by, nor is intended to curtail, free speech or criticism of Islam as a religion,” it [the APPG] added.

Nonsense. The term “Islamophobia” was invented precisely in order to inhibit free speech. It provides a way to undermine legitimate islamocriticism, which is a different thing from an “irrational hatred of Islam and Muslims,” by tarring it as “islamophobia.”

“No open society can place religion above criticism and we do not subscribe to the view that a working definition of Islamophobia can or should be formulated with the purpose of protecting Islam from free and fair criticism or debate.”

“War is deceit,” said Mohammed, and the very people who are disingenuously insisting that “no open society can place religion above criticism,” by calling that “religion” a “race” in their “working definition of Islamophobia,” are doing just that – attempting to place Islam above criticism.

“But a report by the former head of the Metropolitan Police counter-terror command, Richard Walton, said the definition would “seriously undermine the effectiveness of the UK’s counterterrorism strategy, putting the country at greater risk from Islamist terrorism.”

A definition of “Islamophobia” as broad and vague – what is “Muslimness”? – as the one presented by the APPG and their collaborators will, if adopted, be used as a weapon, invoked against the police by those being investigated for terrorism.

“Lord Carlile, the former independent reviewer of terrorism legislation, said the definition had ‘left a demonstrably open field for damaging and even absurd conclusions.’”

“Successful and accepted counter-terrorism measures would run the risk of being declared unlawful,” he added. “The APPG definition would lead to judicial review litigation that would hold back the evolution of better counterterrorism law and practice hand in hand with strengthened religious tolerance.”

Think of how that working definition could be used to attack the police as harboring “racist” – that is, “islamophobic”– views, supposedly reflected in their choice of people, organizations, and neighborhoods to investigate. How many suits would be brought, charging the police with “islamophobia,” that would complicate and hamper the police in their counter-terror work/

“Baroness Warsi, a Conservative peer and member of the APPG on British Muslims, called the claims “extraordinary and disturbing.”

“The report makes clear that the definition does not seek to protect or stop criticism of Islam – to suggest it would is disingenuous and divisive,” she wrote on Twitter on Wednesday.

“The inability of senior police officers to understand how Islamophobia – the plethora of everyday micro-aggressions impacting British Muslims – is not the same as hate crime shows a worrying lack of understanding of the communities they seek to police.”

Baroness Warsi called claims that authorities would risk being taken to judicial review using the definition "completely untrue and irresponsible scaremongering."

What are those "everyday micro-aggressions" that Baroness Warsi claims British Muslims must endure? Could she describe them, that purported "plethora," and offer us evidence of their frequency? And while she is on the subject of micro-aggressions, should we not remind her of the dozens of macro-aggressions committed by Muslims? Think of the 7/7 terror attacks, the murder of Drummer Rigby, the killings on Westminster Bridge, the bombs at the Manchester Arena. Think of the British Muslims who went off to join ISIS in its campaign of murder of non-Muslims, and from Iraq and Syria made videos taunting the British Infidels. And what about the macro-aggressions against thousands of white, non-Muslim English girls, inflicted by the many Muslim grooming gangs that operated with impunity for so long in a dozen British cities? How do those stack up compared to the "micro-aggressions" against Muslims which so horrify Baroness Warsi?

"Naz Shah, Labour's shadow equalities minister, accused the Conservative Party of being "in denial about Islamophobia and other forms of racism in its ranks."

Naz Shah can describe this putative "Islamophobia" all she wants as a "form of racism," but repetition is not evidence. Every time this is said, the proper reply is this: "Islamophobia is a word that has been invented to mislabel islamocriticism. Its goal is to shut down such criticism, to stifle free speech whenever that speech includes something negative having to do with Islam or with Muslims.

"If Ms May refuses to adopt the definition of Islamophobia, the message she sends to the Muslim community will be heard loud and clear," she added.

The only message Prime Minister May would be sending is that the government will not be bullied into submission by Muslims claiming victimhood (that claimed “plethora of micro aggressions”), and will not adopt the “working definition” of Islamophobia if in the opinion of the police that will make their work combatting Muslim extremism and terrorism even more hellishly difficult than it already is.

“[The NPCC letter] shows a worrying trend of seeing British Muslims through the lens of terror and security, and the prime minister must distance herself from this immediately.”

It would be strange if the National Police Chiefs Council did not see some British Muslims through “the lens of terror and security,” for that is their business: to identify, investigate, and foil would-be terrorists. Naz Shah’s bullying tone – “if Mrs. May refuses...” and “the prime minister must distance herself from this [the NPCC letter] immediately”– is characteristically offensive.

The refusal of the British government to adopt the Muslim-concocted “working definition” of “Islamophobia” has enraged many Muslims. How regrettable. That refusal is, in fact, a welcome sign of political sanity. May it be a harbinger of harder decisions still to come.

First published in