

Racist abuse will not deter Muslim Hikers' Christmas walk

This was the headline [on the BBC](#) a few days ago. It referred back to Christmas 2021 when a Muslim hiking group, 130 strong, from Birmingham, Coventry, Yorkshire and Lancashire marched round and up Mam Tor which is a well known hill in England's beautiful Peak District. They are called Muslim Hikers and their organiser is one Haroon Mota who is also active in Muslim Runners. He is making a career out of leading hikes across various national Parks in England and Wales.

A Muslim hiking group founder says past racist abuse will not deter a festive trek up one of the UK's most popular peaks. About 200 walkers are to tackle a 7-mile (11.3km) loop around Mam Tor in the Peak District on Christmas Day.

There are shorter walks round Mam Tor; I even walked a half mile stretch myself in November 2019 but the weather was so bad that day we then went in the Blue John Cavern (thinking a cave has a roof, yes it does, but it drips....) and after a tour and a pot of tea we went back to our accommodation. I digress, but it is a popular area for walkers; so popular the paths have been badly damaged in places. About which more later.



“That type of abuse... it's unsurprising, it's problematic and we need to address it, but it's something we're very much used to dealing with

Muslim Hikers: 'What are 'proper walkers?'

now,” said Mr Mota.

I read the remarks criticising the group. Overuse of our national parks is a problem. Damage to the paths will happen even if the people walking are being careful about litter and fires. I saw nothing which criticised or insulted the colour, religion or ethnicity of the Muslim hikers. But sadly leaning towards victimhood is not uncommon with this demographic and therefore the media and the group immediately identified racism and Islamophobia.

The [Birmingham Mail](#) even called the critics “Countryside Trolls” which I could claim as racism against local people and longstanding ramblers. ...sometimes we're the only hijab wearing hikers or at times the only black people . . .I think being Muslim and Black I would struggle to go hiking alone . . . the only moment I didn't feel out of place was when I went with Muslim Hikers.”

This is the reason for the concern about the wearing away of the footpaths and the cost of the repairs and work to maintain them. From [the Star](#)

Separating the gritstone edges of the Dark Peak from the lighter limestone of the White Peak, the ridge walk offers

near panoramic views across the Peak District. But heavy footfall left the path in a badly eroded state and work to repair the damage to the path started in March this year, and has seen 500 metres of the most serious damage along the path repaired to protect the surrounding landscape and bordering habitat.

The repair work involved using flagstones reclaimed from a local mill, originally built from stone taken from the moors, in a rather circular tale that sees these same flagstones from the mills now nestled atop the hills. With views over to Kinder Scout, the flagstones laid along the Great Ridge will continue to pave the way.

Below left, the Great Ridge newly paved; right with a portion of 200 Muslim hikers making their way yesterday. I do want to walk to the summit of Mam Tor in the foreseeable future but not via The Great Ridge. I will go the easiest way from the nearest car park. I'm told it is a steep path but short.



The 'racist' critic inquired whether the Muslim Hikers would be contributing to the fund to keep these paved footpaths in good future repair – quite a reasonable observation in my opinion.



From the Muslim Hikers twitter page we learn that this year 200 walkers travelled to Derbyshire on Christmas Day. They seem to have had a good time in miserable rain, cheered by tea and snacks at the end. So far so pleasantly multicultural.

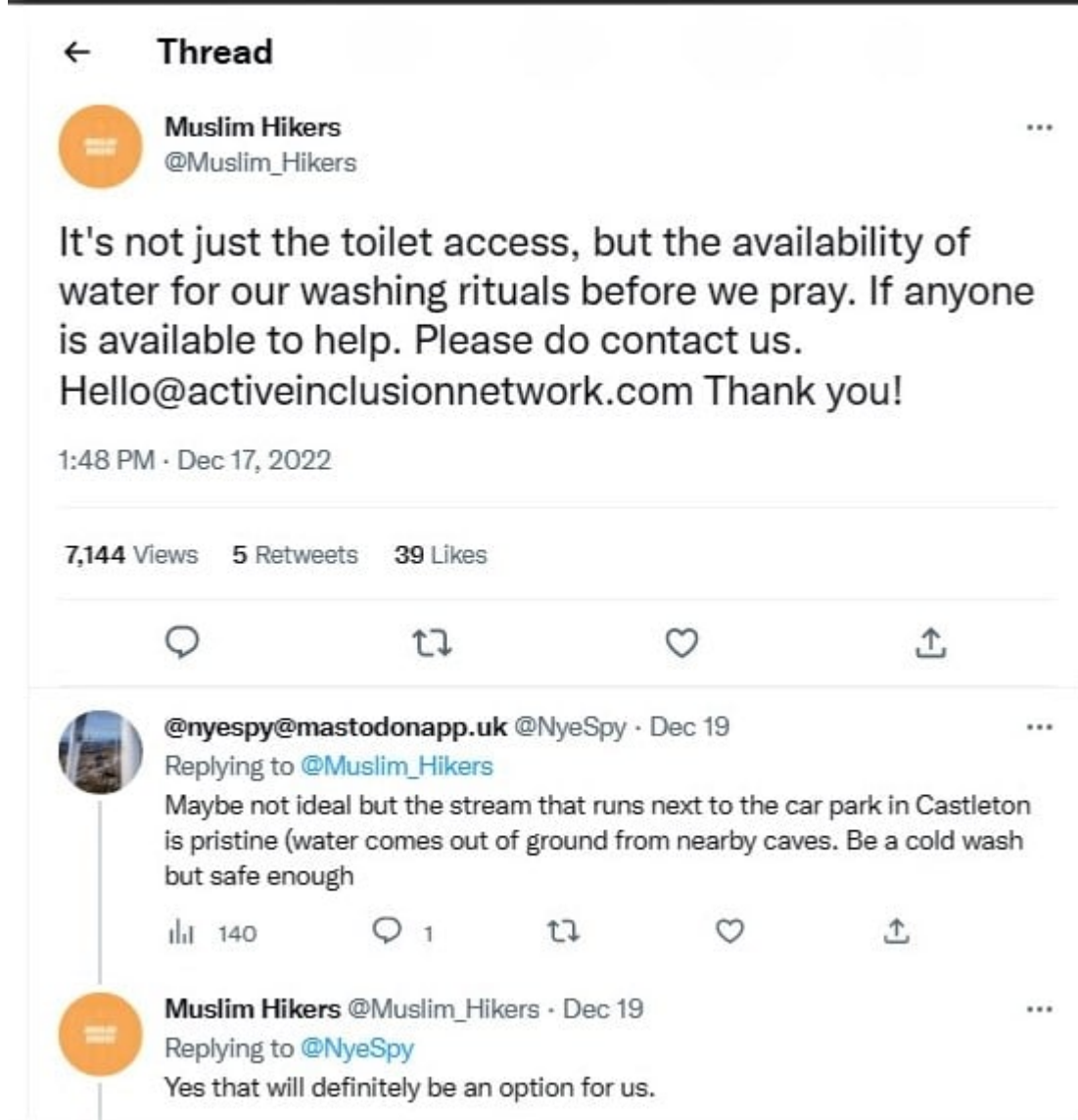
Then digging a little deeper are the exchanges which caught my attention.

The hike was Christmas Day – the one day of the year when almost every worker can expect a day off (except medical staff, the armed forces, police, emergency workers and those few in hospitality serving special Christmas dinners). And the Muslim hikers want the toilet at the Castleton Visitors centre opened especially for them.

[We've spoken to the team](#) @peakdistrict who are trying to help but have had no luck. The toilets & car park are managed by @HighPeakBC who have advised there's no staff available to open toilets for us.

It's a public holiday and toilets aren't open then.

[It's not just the toilet access](#), but the availability of water for our washing rituals before we pray.



I hope
this
doesn't
come
across
as too
ignorant
but
would
wet
wipes be
ok to
use
before
praying?

It has to be water.

Maybe not ideal but the stream that runs next to the car park in Castleton is pristine (water comes out of ground from nearby caves. Be a cold wash but safe enough

Yes that will definitely be an option for us

So 200 walkers, already considered to be a large group, were potentially going to be performing wudu in a once pristine stream. I don't know how they got on.

I then found an exchange on the value of prayer in the open air. I have lost the link (when I find it again I will return)

but their discussion of feeling closer to Allah amongst the beauty of nature, was of itself, in accordance with my own experience, and superficially unobjectionable.

[The entire world](#) is a place of worship for us

Just try to don,t claim any mountain in UK,as a place of worship,please.

[Did you seriously](#) set up a walking group along religious lines?

YES WE DID  

This picture is of their [prayer at the Roaches](#) also in the Peak District, the Staffordshire side, last month. Note the women lined up at the back. Even on a hike in the hills women must know their place.



Tweet



Muslim Hikers
@Muslim_Hikers

Hike & Hallelujah! 🌱🍂🏔️

[Translate Tweet](#)



10:55 AM · Nov 28, 2022





About the Christmas 2021 Mam Tor hike I'm not the only one with thumbs pricking. Political indeed (left)

*Remember Patrick Sookhdeo, former Director of the Barnabas Fund for persecuted Christians, on the concept of Islamic Sacred Space? He set it out at length in his book *Global Jihad* which [I reviewed here in 2008](#). Also in a shorter form in the [Spectator here in 2005](#)*

The first concerns 'sacred space'. Islam is a territorial religion. Any space once gained is considered sacred and should belong to the umma for ever. Any lost space must be regained – even by force if necessary. Migrant Muslim communities in the West are constantly engaged in sacralising new areas – first the inner private spaces of their homes and mosques, and latterly whole neighbourhoods (e.g., Birmingham) by means of marches and processions. So the ultimate end of sacred space theology is autonomy for Muslims of the UK under Islamic law.

By massing and walking in large numbers on heritage British sites, and engaging in public prayer en masse I fear this is what Haroon Mota (look at his personal tweets – he is not just

active in keep fit circles but pro Palestinian, anti-Israel ones and other issues) has in mind with his organisation and Go Fund me account.

Superficially this all looks very positive and many of the walkers may have no more on their mind than fresh air, exercise and 'getting to know the country that has nurtured me'. But I fear an agenda.