

The Islamophobia Industry in Britain

'British Muslims report big rise in Islamophobia' said the headlines of an article in the *Guardian* for 12 November. From the headline, I thought I would read that there had been an increase in the number of vicious attacks on Muslims qua Muslims, or at least of acts of physical desecration.

Not a bit of it. What I read instead were things like the following, taken from a survey of Muslim opinion:

More than two-thirds of Muslims told the survey that they had heard anti-Islamic comments by politicians, and half thought that politicians condoned Islamophobic acts.

Or:

Subtle effects of discrimination are also on the rise, the study

suggests, with 63% reporting "being talked down to or treated

as if you were stupid; having your opinion minimised or devalued", up from 38% in 2010.

These figures by themselves mean very little. They could indeed mean that more anti-Islamic remarks are being passed, or they could mean that Muslims are increasingly sensitive to mistakenly-perceived slights, or indeed both. We do, after all, live in a society in which complaints such as 'having your opinion minimised' are treated as justified just because they have been made. The definition of bullying in the hospital in which I worked was that someone felt bullied, with no necessity for there to be an objective correlative of the feeling. Needless to say, complaints of bullying increased because they were auto-justifying.

Feeling that you have been talked down may be as much in the receiving ear as in the transmitting mouth, but in any case is hardly evidence of an unreasoning hatred or fear of Islam. I dare say that if I were to search my memory, I could find an instance of having been talked down to in the last year. Even if there are instances of Muslims being talked down to because they are Muslim, this is not necessarily because of hatred or fear of Islam: condescension is often a manifestation of a misguided attempt to be kind or understanding.

A man described as a Professor of Racism Studies, who therefore has a vested interest in the survival of racism, is reported as saying that there 'is increasing hostility on the streets in terms of physical attacks and abuse,' and I am prepared to believe that there might have been; in view of the activities of at least some of the followers of Mohammed, and the crudity of so many of our fellow-countrymen, it would be surprising if there had not. But it is curious how the article gives no figures for actual physical attacks. I wonder why not?

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