



**P R E V E N T I N G  
V I O L E N T E X T R E M I S M ?**

# CONTENTS

1. Introduction
2. IHRC Briefing, 2009
3. CAMPACC's statement
4. University and College Union Congress motion

The information contained in this booklet is taken from IHRC's response to the government's consultation on Prevent in 2009. While we are 6 years removed from the consultation, the information contained in it is still relevant today.

Since the introduction of Prevent, IHRC has argued that it is flawed and will not work. We have consistently pointed out that it fails to achieve its stated objective of eradicating terrorism / extremism and in the process criminalises and marginalizes the Muslim community.

The Counter Terrorism and Security Act was enacted in January 2015. The Act introduced a raft of new measures to deal with terrorism and extremism in the UK. Most disturbingly it extended the reach of its Prevent programme and placed it on a statutory footing.

It is IHRC's view that the Act is part of a long history of using legislation to target and criminalise the Muslim community. The CTSA is by far the most Orwellian to date; it will erode civil liberties and turn the UK into a police state.

#### **PREVENT: The emergence of a police state**

After the 2005 London attacks, the government set up a Preventing Extremism Taskforce assigned to draw up a strategy aimed, it was said, at winning the hearts and minds of Muslims by promoting a narrative that would counter extremist violence carried out in the name of Islam. Those discussions culminated in the birth of PREVENT, the so-called community engagement part of a four-pronged counter terrorism strategy which went by the title CONTEST.

PREVENT was predicated on the idea that British Muslim society lacked an effective counter narrative to 'extremist' ideological positions that were proving increasingly appealing to young Muslims affronted and angered by the effect on their co-religionists of western governments' foreign policies, in particular the invasions of Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003. Tapping into widespread British Muslim revulsion to the London attacks it claimed to seek to build a consensus around defeating the extremist narrative.

However what was originally conceived and sold by the government as a strategic partnership with other stakeholders – chief amongst the Muslim community - to counter terrorism has turned into an aggressive social engineering exercise to transform the attitudes of the law-abiding majority and gather information on them.

British Muslims, who were initially dubious about PREVENT but won over by promises that it would help expand their organisational capacity to deal with violent extremism in-house and largely on their own terms, soon discovered that the whole initiative was a state-led snooping campaign. Shami Chakrabarti, director of Liberty, branded it the biggest spying programme in Britain in modern times. PREVENT drew on voluntary sector organisations, community groups, educational institutions, local authorities, prisons, mosques and police forces to map the make-

up and dynamics of British Muslim communities, often seeking information that had little to do with violent extremism or terrorism.

By 2011, following a government review into counter-terrorism strategy, it had also become clear that PREVENT would entail a more aggressive attitude towards changing opinions amongst British Muslims. Henceforth it would no longer be enough to use counter-narratives to challenge violent extremism - it was also expected that Muslims should also actively promote "core British values", which according to the government, included conformity with its foreign policy objectives.<sup>1</sup>

### **Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 and Prevent**

The Act places Prevent on a statutory footing:

- It creates an obligation to monitor and report extremism - colleges, schools, prisons, GPs and councils now have a legal duty to prevent people being drawn into terrorism. Schools, nurseries even GPs will be required to monitor those they provide services to and report anyone they believe is at risk of, or has in fact been drawn in to terrorism. Universities will have to draw up policies on extremist campus speakers, and prisons will be required to have policies for dealing with radicals. The Home Office will be able to get court orders obliging bodies to comply with their obligations.
- "De-Radicalisation" Panels - The Act has created a legal duty that will require local authorities to establish a panel to refer people identified as being at risk of 'being drawn into terrorism'. The composition of that panel is set out in the Act, and its purpose is to draw up a "de-radicalisation" plan for the person identified as being at risk. The Act makes no provision for the person identified to have legal or other representation, or in the case of a child, to have a parent present.

### **Counter Terrorism and Security Act: The Consolidation of a Police State**

The obligation on teachers, GPs and other professionals to report those who they suspect of being at risk of being drawn into terrorism effectively incorporates them into the security apparatus. It will also mean that individuals will be monitored, on behalf of the state, starting from a young age at school / nursery<sup>2</sup> and continuing for the rest of their lives being watched by GPs, health workers and social workers. The powers will lead to a breakdown in trust between teachers / health workers on the one hand and students / patients on the other. This proposal

---

<sup>1</sup>Extract from <http://www.ihr.org.uk/attachments/article/10904/TEUK%20Report-FV-FB.pdf> Page 8

<sup>2</sup><http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/nursery-staff-to-be-forced-to-report-toddlers-at-risk-of-becoming-terrorists-9956414.html>

does very little to combat radicalisation and will only create a police state in which people will feel they cannot trust the professionals in their lives because they are at risk of being reported.

The setting up of local panels to prepare a plan for those at risk of radicalisation is an obvious example of the UK moving towards policing peoples thoughts. Leaving aside the obvious criticisms that the identified individuals will have no way of making representations to the panel or even appealing the panel's decision, it is staggering to think that the UK government believes it has the right to determine what others are allowed to think and believe, and impose "de-radicalisation" plans on those who disagree with the government's notions of acceptable beliefs.

This Act is a continuation of the same tried and failed policies that have been pursued by successive governments since 2001. It is yet another attempt by the government to erode our civil liberties and further demonise the Muslim community.

Studies and even a Parliamentary Report have concluded that the PREVENT regime of attempting to stop young Muslims from becoming radicalised is not working and is simply alienating Muslims in Britain by serving as a cover for intelligence gathering on the community. The programme is widely discredited and extending it further will only be counter-productive. PREVENT has not succeeded in staunching terrorism as the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe, himself conceded when he said the number of 'lone wolf' attacks foiled in 2014 had gone up compared to previous years.

**Islamic Human Rights Commission**  
**June 2015**

## **Preventing Violent Extremism Response by the Islamic Human Rights Commission To UK Government Consultation, September 2009**

### **Summary**

The Prevent strategy is doomed to fail in its objectives of preventing violent extremism unless and until it solves a number of inherent flaws

Firstly, its entire premise is that all Muslims are potential terrorists. Such an Islamophobic assumption serves to legitimise and validate the views of the Far Right and other Islamophobes.

Secondly, the Prevent agenda unhelpfully conflates the issues of community cohesion and community services delivery with issues of intelligence gathering and counter-terrorism. By doing so, the Government adopts a position that the British Muslim community can only be viewed through the single prism of counter-terrorism efforts.

Thirdly, the Prevent strategy fails to sufficiently engage with the primary motivations behind the actions of terrorists - an unjust and oppressive foreign policy and instead, it focuses on periphery, if not irrelevant, issues of democratic participation, education, and the role of women in the community.

Fourthly, the Prevent strategy documents fail to define emotive and loaded terms such as “violent extremism”, “extremism”, and “radicalisation”. Such failures when coupled with intensive pressure on local authorities to produce results of projects designed to have tackled these concepts, have resulted in these concepts being defined at the whim of individuals within councils, with their biases, prejudices and lack of understanding. This has manifested itself in a McCarthyite spying culture being implemented in councils, university campuses and even primary schools, as part of the mainstreaming of Prevent.

Fifthly, the terminology of “violent extremism” completely ignores the very real and dangerous threats and actions by Far Right groups and racist and Islamophobic individuals, whose violent extremism is of rapidly growing concern to all communities.

Finally, the Government’s efforts to create an alternative narrative to the Al-Qaeda brand have in essence been a cynical experiment in social engineering. Through its creation, promotion and financing of new organisations, which have no connection to the majority of Muslims and whose beliefs and practices contradict core teachings of Islam itself, the Government has further isolated the vast majority of Muslims in the UK, who are clearly not taken in by such tactics.

### **Background**

On 5 April 2007, in a document entitled 'Preventing violent extremism - Winning hearts and

minds', Ruth Kelly, Secretary of State for Communities & Local Government (CLG), announced a "new action plan to step-up work with Muslim communities to isolate, prevent and defeat violent extremism". (i)

As part of this agenda, a Home Office fund for community cohesion, in place since the Northern cities disturbances of Summer 2001, was transformed into a Preventing Violent Extremism 'Pathfinder fund'. The 2007/8 PVE Pathfinder Fund delivered £6m in funding to around 70 local authorities to work with partners and communities to deliver a community-based response to violent extremism.

Eligibility for the fund was based on concentrations of Muslim population with 5% or more and funding was distributed according to an assessment carried out by CLG of the need and ambition of the proposals brought forward.

In June 2008, the Home Office decided to mainstream the Prevent agenda and announced the availability of £45 million in new funding to "local authorities, schools, community groups and police to tackle violent extremism. (ii)"

### **Critique**

There are a number of problems with the current Prevent strategy which, unless remedied, will ultimately lead to its complete failure, counter-productive results, and a waste of the taxpayer's money.

Firstly, the entire premise for the strategy is the incorrect and Islamophobic assumption that every member of the Muslim community is a potential terrorist who needs to be reprogrammed to renounce terrorism and violent extremism. In doing so, it legitimises and validates the negative stereotypes propagated by Far Right and Islamophobic groups that Islam and Muslims are synonymous with terrorism. This in turn can lead to even further marginalisation and isolation of the Muslim community.

Secondly, the Prevent agenda unhelpfully conflates the issues of community cohesion and community services delivery with issues of intelligence gathering and counter-terrorism. By doing so, the Government adopts a position that the British Muslim community can only be viewed through the single prism of counter-terrorism efforts.

There is no evidence to link areas that have a high proportion of Muslim inhabitants with terrorism. In their book 'Sleepwalking to Segregation?' Challenging Myths About Race and Migration (pp.107-8), Nissa Finney and Ludi Simpson analyse the data for the districts of origin of Muslims charged with terrorist offences. They write: "If 'segregated areas', where there are the largest concentrations of Muslims, were hotbeds of terrorism ... then one would expect more to be charged in these areas. Seventeen of those charged in the period August 2004 to

October 2006 were residents of Bradford, Luton, Newham or Wandsworth, four of the seven most Muslim districts where 18% of the population is Muslim. But just as many lived in other areas; for example, 16 lived in districts with on average only 1% Muslims, coming from Breckland in Norfolk, Doncaster, Bournemouth, Reigate in Surrey, Bexley, Brighton and Hove, Aylesbury Vale and Greenwich. The only set of districts where more Muslims were charged than others was those with the second-lowest concentrations, including Crawley, Lambeth, Wycombe and Manchester. So, Muslims living in highest concentration Muslim areas are not more likely to be terrorists than Muslims living in any other type of area. There is no reason to link particular levels of concentration with terrorism."

Thirdly, the Prevent strategy fails to sufficiently engage with the primary motivations behind the actions of terrorists - an unjust and oppressive foreign policy which has caused and continues to cause immense suffering throughout the Muslim world. Instead, it focuses on periphery, if not irrelevant, issues of democratic participation, education, and the role of women in the community.

Fourthly, the Prevent strategy documents fail to define emotive and loaded terms such as "violent extremism", "extremism", and "radicalisation". When coupled with intensive pressure on local authorities to hit targets, such failures to define have resulted in these concepts being defined at the whim of individuals within councils, with their biases, prejudices and lack of understanding.

The matter has been further complicated by indications as to what is unacceptable behaviour but not definitively "violent extremism". For example, in a speech at the London School of Economics, former Secretary of State for CLG Hazel Blears included the following behaviour as unacceptable aspects of Islam: "A belief in the supremacy of the Muslim people, in a divine duty to bring the world under the control of hegemonic Islam, in the establishment of a theocratic Caliphate, and in the undemocratic imposition of theocratic law on whole societies."(iii)

In February 2009, a draft version of Contest 2 leaked to the press proposed labeling as "extremist" anyone who advocated a caliphate of Muslim nations, promoted Sharia'ah law, believed in jihad or armed resistance anywhere in the world, including Palestinian armed resistance against the Israeli military, argued that Islam prohibits homosexuality and that it is a sin against Allah, and failed to condemn the killing of British soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan. Although the final Contest 2 document did not include any such specific definition, the hysteria created by the leaked report was enough to flag up what local authorities should be looking out for.

Essentially, in its efforts to "stop people becoming terrorists", the Government has effectively criminalised all forms of political opinion, expression and involvement by Muslims. This has manifested itself in a McCarthyite spying culture being implemented in councils, university campuses and even primary schools, as part of the mainstreaming of Prevent.



One example of this is the Government's toolkit for schools entitled 'Learning together to be safe' which provides guidelines to schools on preventing violent extremism, by which teachers are expected to report any child they suspect of harbouring extremist views. Within these guidelines are included advice from the Quilliam Foundation about danger signs which teachers should look out for including "Political ideology — use of political propaganda that describes political systems and countries as 'Kufr' or anti-Islamic, and expressing the need to replace them with 'The Islamic system', or Caliphate...' Suspended morality...; Conspiratorial mindset and 'westophobia'...Ultra conservative outlook..." As the An-Nisa Society has stated, such advice is highly simplistic and subjective and raises a number of questions:

- What are the 'appropriate mechanisms?'
- What will happen to a child identified as a 'potential terrorist'?
- Where are the Muslim voluntary sector agencies that will ensure that the child is dealt with appropriately?
- What safeguards are there to ensure that a child or young person is not wrongly labelled for life?
- Who will make these agencies and schools accountable?
- Where are the Muslim voluntary sector support services that can help Muslim families placed in such a situation with, for example, counseling, advocacy and legal help and so on? (vi)

As part of its strategy, the Government has used a quantitative measure of 'resilience' to so-called violent extremism - termed National Indicator 35 (NI 35). This is an assessment framework that evaluates the effectiveness of Prevent related work programmes. Local authorities were asked to sign up to these performance indicators which would assess and measure how well they were tackling extremism. However there was and continues to be much resistance and concern. Some local authorities have resented this reporting requirement, because it makes them an arm of the police or of the security.

According to the LGA Office Holders, "The Home Office (HO), via the Office for Security and Counter Terrorism (OSCT), have produced a 'heat map' which identifies 30 areas with a high risk of producing violent extremists and are seeking a good take-up of NI: 35 across this group. Around nineteen areas across the country have indicated that they will pick up the indicator in their priority 35 set. The HO believe that local authorities that do not select NI:35 are not prioritising PVE and concluding that little or no PVE work is being undertaken. To persuade local authorities to select NI:35, the HO is applying pressure via the Police, and senior officials during LAA (Local Area Agreements) negotiations which has had only limited success... Local authorities are reluctant to pick up the indicator because the term "violent extremism" could alienate communities, undermining cohesion work and are extremely cautious about making public statements around PVE. There is also concern about the measurability of the indicator."(vii)

The Chief Executive of Bradford Council and leader of the Conservative Group Kris Hopkins too raised his disquiet with the PVE campaign when responding to questions from Channel 4 reporter Darsha Soni (10th September 2008) and stated: "What they said was that if we were willing to go out and monitor the Muslim community and use the resources of the local council to do that they would release an amount of money to us. The local council should be there to promote education, caring for elderly people, making sure they are in a safe place and not become a wing of the security services." (viii)

When asked what the Government's response was to his statement that he was not prepared to sign up to NI35, Hopkins replied that a whole procession of people, both officers and politicians, had come to Bradford to tell them that they were "soft on terrorism."

In June 2009, Reading Conservative councilor Jamie Chowdhary said of NI 35: "If ever a document qualified for the charge of inciting racial hatred, then this is it." He said it would "isolate, stigmatise and alienate one community, my community".

Fifthly, the terminology of "violent extremism" completely ignores the very real and dangerous threats and actions by Far Right groups and racist and Islamophobic individuals, whose violent extremism is of rapidly growing concern to all communities.

Since the election of BNP leader Nick Griffin to the European Parliament and his comments to Channel 4 News describing Islam as a "cancer" that needed to be removed from Europe by "chemotherapy" (ix), the threats and actions of Far Right extremists against Muslims has rapidly escalated in both in frequency and severity. Numerous mosques, Islamic centres and even the Glasgow office of the Islamic Relief office have been subjected to arson attacks. In Loughton, Essex, where the BNP has been advocating a 'No Mosques in Loughton' campaign, community leader Noor Ramjanally's home was torched, his family threatened before he was abducted at knife-point. In South London, there has been a spate of attacks against Muslims outside mosques during Ramadan, one of which resulted in the murder of a 65 year old man.

The last six months has seen a growing number of virulently anti-Islam marches and demonstrations organised by Far Right such as the English Defence League (EDL) and Casuals United. The demonstrations, in which fascists have chanted 'We hate Muslims' and 'No more mosques', have been allowed proceed in areas with high Muslim populations such as Luton and Birmingham. During a march in Luton, fascists attacked and vandalized the homes, businesses and property of the Muslim population in scenes reminiscent of Mosleys Brownshirts in the 1930s. Rather than crackdown on such blatant fascism, the attitude of the government has been one of silent acquiescence.

Beyond demonstrations, Far Right extremists are plotting deadlier attacks against Muslims. Numerous terrorist plots have been foiled this year including one in July when an international network of Far Right extremists with access to 300 weapons and 80 bombs was uncovered by

counter-terrorism detectives in what was described as the "largest seizure of a suspected terrorist arsenal since the IRA mainland bombings of the early 1990s." In another recent case not linked to those arrests, detectives seized maps and plans of mosques from the homes of suspected Far Right supporters.

Most recently, white supremacist Neil Lewington was convicted of planning a terrorist bombing campaign against those he considered non-British. In a raid on his home, police discovered what was described as a "bomb-making factory" as well as racist propaganda and videos of neo-Nazi terrorists.

Earlier in April, Neil MacGregor was convicted after admitting to threatening to blow up Scotland's biggest mosque and to behead one Muslim a week until every mosque in Scotland was shut down. Curiously, MacGregor was never charged under any anti-terrorism legislation or tried in the High Court as would be expected. Instead, he was charged and tried with mere breach of the peace in the Glasgow Sherriff Court where he was sentenced to only three years' probation. One need not ask the inevitable question, 'what if he had been a Muslim?' For several cases in recent years have answered that question – draconian sentences of between 8 and 40 years splashed on the front pages of all print media with 24/7 coverage of the perpetrator's background, his family, his community, and his religion.

This growing threat to Muslims and other ethnic communities led to Commander Shaun Sawyer of Scotland Yard's counterterrorism command telling a public meeting of Muslims in July that the police feared a "spectacular" terrorist attack by the Far Right extremists designed to kill and to stoke racial tensions. Sawyer added that more of his officers needed to be deployed to try to thwart neo-Nazi-inspired violence. Senior counter terrorism sources also admitted that the Counter Terrorism Unit in Leeds was currently investigating "just as many" far right plots as al-Qaeda conspiracies.

If Prevent is sincere about dealing with violent extremism, it must tackle this growing menace to society.

Finally, the Government's efforts to create an alternative narrative to the Al-Qaeda brand have in essence been a cynical experiment in social engineering. Through its creation, promotion and financing of new organisations, who have no connection to the majority of Muslims and whose beliefs and practices contradict core teachings of Islam itself, the Government has further isolated the vast majority of Muslims in the UK, who are clearly not taken in by such tactics.

In its document, 'Preventing Violent Extremism – Winning hearts and minds', it unequivocally stated that "It is not for Government to intervene in theological debates. But there is a role for Government in providing support where it is sought or needed. We will support the development of strong faith institutions and leaders capable of engaging effectively with all members of Muslim communities". (x)

Since the launch of the Prevent strategy, the exact opposite has been the case and the Government has made every effort to intervene, directly or indirectly, in theological debates and discussions central to the Islamic faith. It has in particular sought to marginalise those Muslims who are vociferous in their political beliefs and instead embarked on a mission to create, promote and fund groups whose version of Islam is more in tune with the Government's own beliefs. These groups hailed as the true representatives of the Muslim communities include the Sufi Muslim Council (who did not exist prior to their launch by Ruth Kelly in the Houses of Parliament in July 2006), the British Muslim Forum (BMF), and the Quilliam Foundation. All have received and continue to receive the highest amount of funding (xi) to promote their version of Islam which advocate supporting the Government's domestic and foreign policies without dissent.(xii) The Quilliam Foundation in particular fails to attract more than a miniscule number of supporters and has been by and large condemned by Muslims across the faith spectrum for their attempts to distort the true teachings of Islam.

In its latest document in June 2008, Preventing Violent Extremism: A Strategy for Delivery, the OSCT lists certain key activities it seeks to achieve including supporting the establishment of a board of leading Muslim scholars to articulate an understanding of Islam in Britain.(xiii) It is difficult to think of any clearer way to try and change the teachings of a religion than by establishing a board of Government appointed or approved scholars to teach the people their religion.

IHRC wishes to remind Prime Minister Brown what the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, Asma Jahangir, said in her report on the UK last year: "The Special Rapporteur would like to emphasize that it is not the Government's role to look for the "true voices of Islam" or of any other religion or belief. Since religions or communities of belief are not homogenous entities it seems advisable to acknowledge and take into account the diversity of voices. The Special Rapporteur reiterates that the contents of a religion or belief should be defined by the worshippers themselves..."

Rather than deal with those creatures of Government who will tell it what it wants to hear, the Government should engage with those groups and individuals with whom they may disagree but who will provide them with a more accurate and realistic viewpoint of how it is actually perceived at the grassroots. Over expensive and cosmetic projects may make good press but will not "prevent violent extremism" in any community.

- 
- (i) 'Preventing Violent Extremism – Winning hearts and minds';  
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/320752.pdf>
  - (ii) Strategic issues - Preventing Violent Extremism; LGA Office Holders Item 2a 16 April 2008  
<http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/aio/480450>

- (iii) Many Voices: understanding the debate about preventing violent extremism, Hazel Blears speech at LSE, 25 February 2009. Available at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/speeches/corporate/manyvoices>
- (iv) Anti-terror code 'would alienate most Muslims', The Guardian, 17 February 2009 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2009/feb/17/counterterrorism-strategy-muslims>
- (v) <http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/violentextremism/quilliam/>
- (vi) 'Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) & PREVENT: A Response from the Muslim Community', An-Nisa Society (Feb 2009)
- (vii) Strategic issues - Preventing Violent Extremism; LGA Office Holders Item 2a 16 April 2008 <http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/aio/480450>
- (viii) <http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=vNYiVXAWnwl>
- (ix) 'BNP's Griffin: Islam is a cancer', Channel 4 News, 9 July 2009 [http://www.channel4.com/news/articles/politics/domestic\\_politics/bnpaposs+griffin+islam+is+a+cancer/3257872](http://www.channel4.com/news/articles/politics/domestic_politics/bnpaposs+griffin+islam+is+a+cancer/3257872)
- (x) 'Preventing Violent Extremism – Winning hearts and minds'. Ibid n1
- (xi) The SMC received £160,000 in Government funding in 2006/07, over £80,000 the following year and £150,000 more was awarded to it for 2008/09. 1. In 2006/07, the BMF received £115,000 in funding. In 2007/08, this rose to almost £195,000. Another £125,000 has been budgeted for the next three years.
- (xii) The SMC's spiritual leader Shaykh Hisham Kabbani has previously thanked the British government for its role in the Middle East and also has links with the Neocons in the US and the repressive Karimov regime in Uzbekistan, positions at odds with those of most British Muslims. The BMF have encouraged young British Muslims to join the British army and supported proposals to raise the maximum time limit for detention without charge from 28 days to 42 days. See Join the British Army and become a martyr, say Muslims, The Sunday Times, 10 December 2006 <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/article666527.ece> and UK's top Muslim backs '42 days', The Sun, 10 June 2008 <http://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/news/article1270796.ece>
- (xiii) <http://security.homeoffice.gov.uk/news-publications/publication-search/prevent-strategy/preventing-violent-extremism?view=Binary>

Statement for IHRC-CAMPACC conference, 'Preventing Violent Extremism?', 13 June 2015, London

**The 'Prevent' agenda conflates terrorism, extremism and political dissent:  
How to build effective resistance?**

Opposition to the Home Office 'Prevent' programme has been growing among public-sector staff who are meant to monitor and report on Muslim communities. More people are criticising the programme as Islamophobic and anti-democratic, especially since it has been set in law by the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015.

At the National Union of Teachers (NUT) conference in April, speakers denounced the Prevent agenda for suppressing free discussion of political issues (BBC, 2015). There the NUT General Secretary stated, 'We will work with members to ensure that the Prevent agenda is not used to criminalise young people or to close down the space for debate in schools.' At the University and College Union (UCU) conference in May, moreover, delegates voted to boycott the entire Prevent agenda (UCU, 2015).

How to build collective resistance which undermines the Prevent agenda? We need to understand better how it exerts pressures on administrators, staff and students to comply. These pressures come from a state agenda conflating terrorism, extremism and political dissent.

**Persecuting all resistance as terrorism**

All UK counter-terror legislation rests on the Terrorism Act 2000. According to its broad definition, terrorism encompasses simply 'the threat of action designed to influence the government' in ways involving 'serious damage to a property' anywhere in the world. This statutory definition was the UK's basis for banning several national liberation organisations as terrorist, for persecuting migrant and Muslim communities, and for criminalising speech acts and political symbols. In such ways, the 'anti-terror' agenda supports oppressive regimes allied with the UK – for example Turkey's oppression of the Kurds, Sri Lanka's oppression of Tamil minorities, Israel's attacks on the democratically elected Hamas government, etc. Muslim and migrant groups here have been turned into suspect communities, especially those protesting against the UK's support for oppressive regimes abroad.

Similar practices have a long history. To undermine struggles for national self-determination, colonial counter-insurgency campaigns persecuted entire populations as 'terrorist suspects' under 'emergency powers'. Those colonial practices were brought back home by the state terror campaign against the nationalist community in Northern Ireland, turning all Irish people into a suspect community (Hillyard, 1993). The overall strategy was formulated as 'low-intensity operations', blurring any distinction between violent resistance and civil protest as the target for state attack (Kitson, 1971).

Along similar lines, since 2001 UK Muslims have been monitored, intimidated and persecuted under suspicion of terrorist association. When the neoconservative agenda declared its 'war on terror' after the September 2001 attacks, liberalism was turned into 'an ideology of total war' against a global threat, seen as a 'fanaticism inherent to Islam' (Kundnani, 2014). Since the New Labour government adopted the neocon agenda, UK Muslims have been treated as a suspect

community, warranting systematic surveillance to identify potential sympathisers of 'terrorism' under the 2000 statutory definition. Subsequent laws have established greater powers of detention and punishment, as well as new speech-crimes such as 'glorification of terrorism'.

The domestic counter-insurgency role became more explicit in Contest 2 (HM Govt, 2008). It called for greater integration of policy: namely, to abandon all distinctions between domestic and foreign policy, between soft and hard power, between civil and military resistance, etc. Schools, youth clubs and universities were meant to monitor the views of Muslim communities. These measures must target 'a large group of non-violent people who create an environment in which terrorists can operate' (Farr, 2009). In this racist imaginary, any mundane activity can disguise mortal dangers.

Extending that rationale, Contest 2 featured various means to restrict the scope for 'radicalization', even among groups not advocating violence. With the euphemism 'non-prosecution executive action', the state has imposed various punishments without trial, e.g. house arrest, asset-freezing, travel bans, long interrogations at UK ports, long detention periods without charge, etc. These measures stigmatize individuals and deter dissent among entire communities.

### **'Prevent' agenda serving the UK 'counter-terrorism' framework**

As part of Contest 2, the Home Office initiated its 'Prevent Violent Extremism' programme. This identified a broad threat encompassing merely verbal support for violent resistance anywhere in the world. Such views were cast as Islamist extremism – incompatible with 'our values', as if only Muslims could support resistance against imperialist Occupation or Zionist terror. Regardless of its public statements, in practice the early Prevent programme defined the term 'extremist' by the degree to which Muslims oppose UK government policy. Numerous Muslim organizations were funded to 'counter violent extremism', especially through surveillance. The Prevent programme has violated privacy, undermined professional norms of confidentiality and degraded local democracy (Kundnani, 2009).

New Labour's counter-terrorism regime distinguished between 'moderate versus extremist Muslims', as if religious belief had a continuum leading to terrorism; this language put the entire Muslim community on the defensive to disavow 'extremism'. Under the ConDem government, Prime Minister David Cameron shifted the explanatory model from religion to 'extremist' beliefs, seen as a continuum: 'As evidence emerges about the backgrounds of those convicted of terrorist offences, it is clear that many of them were initially influenced by what some have called "non-violent extremists", and they then took those radical beliefs to the next level by embracing violence'. Therefore the UK needs 'an active, muscular liberalism to counter the non-violent and violent forms of extremism' (Cameron, 2011).

What does this term mean? According to the Prevent programme, 'Extremism is vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs'. As shown in a critical report, however:

The theory and operation of the Prevent policy contradicts this statement. Much of it is shrouded in secrecy, operates outside the rule of law (without due process) and violates individual liberty. It gives the state unrestricted intrusive powers into the lives of a minority

community and faith; restricting their freedoms of belief, expression and association (Cage UK, 2014: 50).

The Prevent agenda has been relentlessly intruding into private lives, even investigating children's thoughts. There is a need for 'a move into the private space' of Muslims to identify views that could show the beginning of radicalization, according to the UK's most senior Muslim police chief (Dodd, 2015). To identify early signs of potential terrorists, Waltham Forest has been surveying primary school children's views under the Radicalisation Leading to Terrorism Programme (Taylor, 2015).

In all those ways, the Prevent agenda treats Muslims as a suspect community which must undergo pervasive surveillance and demonstrate its allegiance to 'British values'. Of course, such values are systematically contradicted by UK foreign policy, but any Muslim raising doubt is cast as an extremist, even a potential terrorist. More than simply rhetorical, the putative link between dissent and terrorism is deeply rooted in the latter's statutory definition. For effectively resisting the Prevent agenda, therefore, we must oppose the UK 'counter-terror' regime – its assumptions, political aims, powers and practices.

## References

- BBC (2015) Teachers 'fear extremism debates in class', 6 April, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-32162012>
- Cage UK (2014) *The Prevent Strategy: A Cradle to Grave Police-State*, <http://www.cageprisoners.com/our-work/reports/item/7693-the-prevent-strategy-a-cradle-to-grave-police-state>
- Cameron, D. (2011) Speech on radicalisation and Islamic extremism, Munich conference on security, 5 March.
- Dodd, V. (2015) Jihadi threat requires move into 'private space' of UK Muslims, says police chief, *The Guardian*, 24 May, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/may/24/jihadi-threat-requires-move-into-private-space-of-uk-muslims-says-police-chief>
- Farr, C. (2009) speech by Director General for Security and Counter-Terrorism, Home Office, 3 October.
- Hillyard, P. (1993) *Suspect Community: People's Experience of the Prevention of Terrorism Acts in Britain*. London: Pluto.
- HM Government (2008) *National Security Strategy of the United Kingdom: Security in an Interdependent World*. London: HMSO.
- HM Government (2014) *Prevent duty guidance: a consultation*, <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/prevent-duty>
- Kitson, F. (1971) *Low Intensity Operations: Subversion, Insurgency, Peacekeeping*. London: Faber.
- Kundnani, A. (2009) *Spooked: How not to prevent violent extremism*, Institute of Race Relations, <http://www.irr.org.uk/news/spooked-how-not-to-prevent-violent-extremism>
- Taylor, D. (2015) Parents' fury at primary school radicalisation survey, *The Guardian*, 29 May.
- UCU (2015) Prevent agenda: conference motion, <http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=7523#62>

**Campaign Against Criminalising Communities (CAMPACC)**

[www.campacc.org.uk](http://www.campacc.org.uk), [estella24@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:estella24@tiscali.co.uk)



## UCU Congress motion

### Campaign against the counter-terrorism and security bill

**Composite: Prevent duty and anti-terrorism - Black Members' Standing Committee, Yorkshire and Humberside Regional Committee, Birkbeck University of London, Southern Regional Committee, Birmingham City University, East Midlands Regional Committee**

The Prevent Agenda, formulated by the Labour government to tackle 'extremism', became part of the counter terrorism and security bill under the coalition government. Congress notes with concern the Home Secretary's announcement that the Bill will include a statutory duty upon universities, colleges and other providers of education to have regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism.

Congress deplores that the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 has been passed, despite opposition from our union, the NUS and fellow unions. We applaud UCU's campaign against the bill and in defence of academic freedom. But the campaign must not stop here. We are concerned that the new legislation will lead to more visits by Prevent and police officers to HE/FE campuses, creating a climate of fear, interfering with education and damaging good relations between staff and students. Our branches need advice and support in handling such visits in future.

Congress notes the counter-terrorism and security bill will:

1. require education providers to implement measures preventing radicalisation leading to terrorist acts
2. require educational institutions to 'partner' with local authorities in referring at-risk individuals
3. employ vague, broad definitions of terrorism, including 'non-violent extremism', potentially applying to many forms of activism
4. require Ofsted to police these measures.

Congress further notes:

1. the push towards the promotion of 'British Values' in the curriculum which has now become an OFSTED target coupled with a requirement for lecturers to 'protect learners against radicalisation and extremism'
2. the dangerous misuse of much needed safeguarding initiatives in our institutions to push a racist and Islamophobic narrative
3. concerns raised by the UCU; student societies; a letter signed by over 500 academics.

Congress condemns this attack on academic freedom and confirms that staff must and will not be forced to police student opinion on behalf of the state, nor to act as informers for the state in matters of student belief.

Congress believes that:

- a. this seriously threatens academic freedom and freedom of speech
- b. the broad definition of terrorism will stifle campus activism
- c. the intention to force our members to be involved in the racist labelling of students is unacceptable
- d. the Prevent Agenda will force our members to spy on our learners, is discriminatory towards Muslims, and legitimises Islamophobia and xenophobia, encouraging racist views to be publicised and normalised within society
- e. the monitoring of Muslim students will destroy the trust needed for a safe and supportive learning environment and encourage discrimination against BME and Muslim staff and students
- f. the Prevent agenda will help racist parties such as UKIP to flourish.

Congress calls on the NEC to:

- i. actively campaign against the use of the Agenda in FE and HE institutions and register with government in the strongest terms UCU's absolute opposition to any staff involvement in state surveillance
- ii. campaign with civil liberties and human rights organisations, the NUS and other education unions to oppose these measures and campaign for the abolition of the Prevent Agenda
- iii. lobby MPs to repeal the Prevent Agenda
- iv. survey all branches to monitor how the Agenda is being used and whether our members are being forced to implement it
- v. Provide detailed guidance to branches on how to respond to visits from Prevent and police officers and on the rights of staff to decline to cooperate with them
- vi. issue guidance to branches on resisting these measures and raising questions about the implications for race equality, academic freedom and freedom of speech
- vii. reaffirm our opposition to Islamophobia and racism in all its forms.

**CARRIED AS AMENDED**

#### **62A.1 Compositing amendment Black Members' Standing Committee**

Under 'calls on NEC to,' add new point viii: 'Organise a boycott of the implementation of the Prevent Agenda in colleges and universities'

**CARRIED**

#### **62A.2 Composite: Kingston University, Open University**

Add at end:

Congress:

1. supports the 13 June 2015 conference, 'Preventing Violent Extremism?', being co-organised by civil liberties groups: Islamic Human Rights Commission (IHRC), [ihrc.org.uk](http://ihrc.org.uk), Campaign Against Criminalising Communities (CAMPACC), [www.campacc.org.uk](http://www.campacc.org.uk) and the Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers, [www.haldane.org](http://www.haldane.org)
2. asks UCU to co-sponsor the conference and to offer its national HQ as a possible venue
3. asks UCU to circulate an announcement encouraging all branches to send delegates.

## **CARRIED**

### **SUBSTANTIVE MOTION**

The Prevent Agenda, formulated by the Labour government to tackle 'extremism', became part of the counter terrorism and security bill under the coalition government. Congress notes with concern the Home Secretary's announcement that the Bill will include a statutory duty upon universities, colleges and other providers of education to have regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism.

Congress deplores that the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 has been passed, despite opposition from our union, the NUS and fellow unions. We applaud UCU's campaign against the bill and in defence of academic freedom. But the campaign must not stop here. We are concerned that the new legislation will lead to more visits by Prevent and police officers to HE/FE campuses, creating a climate of fear, interfering with education and damaging good relations between staff and students. Our branches need advice and support in handling such visits in future.

Congress notes the counter-terrorism and security bill will:

1. require education providers to implement measures preventing radicalisation leading to terrorist acts
2. require educational institutions to 'partner' with local authorities in referring at-risk individuals
3. employ vague, broad definitions of terrorism, including 'non-violent extremism', potentially applying to many forms of activism
4. require Ofsted to police these measures.

Congress further notes:

1. the push towards the promotion of 'British Values' in the curriculum which has now become an OFSTED target coupled with a requirement for lecturers to 'protect learners against radicalisation and extremism'
2. the dangerous misuse of much needed safeguarding initiatives in our institutions to push a racist and Islamophobic narrative
3. concerns raised by the UCU; student societies; a letter signed by over 500 academics.

Congress condemns this attack on academic freedom and confirms that staff must and will not be forced to police student opinion on behalf of the state, nor to act as informers for the state in matters of student belief.

Congress believes that:

- a. this seriously threatens academic freedom and freedom of speech
- b. the broad definition of terrorism will stifle campus activism
- c. the intention to force our members to be involved in the racist labelling of students is unacceptable
- d. the Prevent Agenda will force our members to spy on our learners, is discriminatory towards Muslims, and legitimises Islamophobia and xenophobia, encouraging racist views to be publicised and normalised within society
- e. the monitoring of Muslim students will destroy the trust needed for a safe and supportive learning environment and encourage discrimination against BME and Muslim staff and students
- f. the Prevent agenda will help racist parties such as UKIP to flourish.

Congress calls on the NEC to:

- i. actively campaign against the use of the Agenda in FE and HE institutions and register with government in the strongest terms UCU's absolute opposition to any staff involvement in state surveillance
- ii. campaign with civil liberties and human rights organisations, the NUS and other education unions to oppose these measures and campaign for the abolition of the Prevent Agenda
- iii. lobby MPs to repeal the Prevent Agenda
- iv. survey all branches to monitor how the Agenda is being used and whether our members are being forced to implement it
- v. Provide detailed guidance to branches on how to respond to visits from Prevent and police officers and on the rights of staff to decline to cooperate with them
- vi. issue guidance to branches on resisting these measures and raising questions about the implications for race equality, academic freedom and freedom of speech
- vii. reaffirm our opposition to Islamophobia and racism in all its forms
- viii. organise a boycott of the implementation of the Prevent Agenda in colleges and universities.

Congress:

1. supports the 13 June 2015 conference, 'Preventing Violent Extremism?', being co-organised by civil liberties groups: Islamic Human Rights Commission (IHRC), [ihrc.org.uk](http://ihrc.org.uk), Campaign Against Criminalising Communities (CAMPACC), [www.campacc.org.uk](http://www.campacc.org.uk) and the Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers, [www.haldane.org](http://www.haldane.org)

2. asks UCU to co-sponsor the conference and to offer its national HQ as a possible venue
3. asks UCU to circulate an announcement encouraging all branches to send delegates.

**<http://www.ucu.org.uk/7523>**