CAGE RESPONSE
TO A CALL FOR EVIDENCE ON A 'WORKING DEFINITION OF
ISLAMOPHOBIA/ANTI-MUSLIM HATRED

||| CAGE

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Introduction

CAGE has been working in the area of securitisation within the context of the War on Terror for the last fifteen years. Within that period, our case work has dealt with both overt and covert Islamophobia – drawing us to think of Islamophobia as something that must be seen in wider and institutional terms.

We note that this call for evidence deploys the terms 'Islamophobia' and 'Anti-Muslim hatred'. We would critique the latter as focusing on a narrow, interpersonal form of Islamophobia.

Islamophobia as practised at the individual level may indeed be driven by hatred or antipathy against Muslims, and/or those perceived as Muslim.

But any working definition of Islamophobia is incomplete without factoring in the social and political context in Britain which legitimises, normalises and feeds such hatred, and how this is codified into the law and implemented through other national apparatus.

Islamophobia as mobilised and practiced within national and international law is central to our understanding of Islamophobia at CAGE. This manifestation, often used to advance political agendas, is usually deployed within a 'law and order' framework rather than anything overtly affective, or which could be counted within 'Anti Muslim Hatred'.

Furthermore we note the tendency, which has become pronounced recently and especially since the 2016 EU referendum vote, to break down and quantify oppression – whether racism, xenophobia, misogyny or otherwise - through the lens of 'hate crime'.

Hate 'crimes', in turn, demand a carceral response, through the police, to deal with the perpetrator. The call to identify and prosecute those responsible for Islamophobic hate crimes has also become quite vocal, and can be quite cathartic to those communities affected, as apparent evidence of 'something being done' about Islamophobia.

We however counter the idea of 'hate crime' being the best lens through which to understand Islamophobia, as it individualises and exceptionalises instances of Islamophobia, and it does not factor in the wider context that legitimises Islamophobia. By ignoring this wider context, solutions can only ever be short-term at best.

This is exacerbated by the fact that the organs of the state charged with prosecuting hate crime, such as the police, are themselves implicated in enacting anti-Muslim laws and policies, and often have a fraught relationship with Muslim communities – especially the working class.

It is obvious, and yet often overlooked, that individuals in this group will not be convinced to seek the help of the police in documenting their experiences of Islamophobia, when these experiences often involve the police themselves, who are in turn bound to implement problematic laws.

In sum we call for a working definition of Islamophobia that encompasses its institutional and structural forms and recognises these as central to how Islamophobia is operationalised and facilitated in Britain.

We also call for this to be include within the definition so that we can recognise that national politics and the law can be Islamophobic in intent, execution and/or inspiration. This is an important starting point.

CAGE will present evidence specifically on our understanding of how Islamophobia presents in the space of national security.

Muslims as suspects: Islamophobia within the national security space

In order to understand how Islamophobia as practised within national security policy, constitutes a form of anti-Muslim racism, it is important to first set out some data around how Muslims (or at least people who originate from Muslim-majority countries) are disproportionately impacted by its implementation in a manner that can only be described as discriminatory.

We recognise here that institutional Islamophobia actively racialises certain communities as 'Muslim' whilst augmenting their definition as Pakistanis, Somalis, Arabs and so on in their own right. This makes conflations such as equating the definition of Muslim to these designated groups (even though the Muslim community is much more diverse than this), necessary for the sake of our analysis.

We also at this point wish to affirm that there is no clear delineation between Islamophobia as a 'race' issue or a religious issue, because each facet reinforces the other.

Our case work illustrates that markers of religiosity and narratives of Islam as a faith are pathologised and used to target these communities particularly.

This is evidenced by the notion central to British counter-terrorism of idea of 'extremist Islam' or 'Islamism' as falling within a spectrum of religiosity, which is undesirable to the state, and therefore the target of the state legislation used to securitise and police Muslim communities particularly those of the above races/nationalities – whether through the Prevent programme or Ofsted school inspections.

This relationship is crucial to both our understanding of Islamophobia, and we believe to any useful definition of it.

One example of a clearly discriminatory practice within counter-terrorism operations, is the use of Schedule 7 stops at ports entering and exiting the country. The border agency and police use their powers under the Terrorism Act 2000 in order to detain individuals for varied lengths of time and questioning.

Using a Race Disproportionality Ratio (RDR) model, any number of 1.0 is considered to be discriminatory. In another context, the Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) found that discriminatory policing had an RDR rating of 6.5 under stop and search powers exercised on the street and in other contexts based on a black/white distinction.

However, in the case of Schedule 7 stops, the RDR was recorded at 154.5 of those from a Pakistani background, meaning that someone with a Pakistani ethnicity is over 150 times more likely to be stopped than a white person.

Of course, due to the lack of public figures on Schedule 7 with breakdown by religion (despite numerous requests from CAGE), even those who are stopped that are white, could be Muslim. (Massoumi et al, 2017: 10)

In another national security context, that of the pre-crime programme Prevent, data is used to mask the deeply discriminatory impacts of the programme on Muslim communities in particular. Figures are presented that are not proportional to the communities from which they stem. Thus, according to the UK Security Minister Ben Wallace:

Around a quarter of people who are supported by the voluntary Channel programme are for far right concerns - the Prevent strategy deals with all forms of terrorism and does not focus on any one community. (Yorke, 2017)

However, what Wallace does not do, is place the data that has emerged within a ratio of demographics. Thus, if 1000 individuals are referred to the deradicalisation programme Channel after having been referred through Prevent, 250 of those will have been from the far-right. Those 250 would in all likelihood come from a population of 50 million 'white' people in the UK, while the remainder of the 750 referrals, come from a Muslim population of 3 million.

A race disproportionality ratio conducted on these data sets, would inform us that a Muslim is still 50 times more likely to undergo deradicalisation under Channel, than a non-Muslim child from the far-right.

These figures are only part of the story. Much more could be said about the different aspects of national security policy that otherise Muslims, but it should be noted that the construction and implementation of these policies has led to severe scrutiny both within the Muslim community and the broader public.

At a grassroots level, this state of play has led to feelings of disenfranchisement, alienation and resentment, meaning that the institutionalised Islamophobia they embody is having a counterproductive effect.

Dangerous minds: The "othering" of Muslims by the security sector has a ripple effect

Discrimination against Muslims at an institutional level, particularly within a national security context, has a ripple effect on Islamophobia nationwide, especially when we consider that half of the British public believe that Muslims and Arabs should be subjected to specific racial profiling as a matter of national security (Dearden, 2017).

This is unsurprising when the work of the University of Birmingham academic, Chris Allen is considered. In his 2012 report, he highlighted how 84% of media stories about Muslims presented them as likely to be a danger to British society (Allen, 2012).

In the context of education, this is further linked by Professor Tahir Abbas to the neo-liberalisation of the sector, which results in the adoption of policies that increase the idea of Muslims as threats:

The retreat of multiculturalism coincides with the increasing dominance of neoliberalism in education, with the individual not merely a learner but also a customer, where satisfaction is the measure of success rather than explicit learning outcomes. In a post-9/11 'war of terror' culture, this performance-orientated approach is problematical as it views Muslims through the lens of surveillance and suspicion; as 'suspect communities', reflecting the harsh end of neoliberalisation based on the marketisation of education. (Abbas, 2018: 161)

The idea that Muslims have become a 'suspect community' that is racialised within national security frameworks is something that has been argued with great force by Pantazis and Pemberton who claim that Muslims are suspected as a block, without having the defining features of a race (Pantazis and Pemberton, 2011: 1059).

The terrorism studies scholar, Francesco Ragazzi explains their categorisation of the Muslim suspect community further:

They define suspect community as a sub-group of the population that is singled out for state attention as being "problematic". Specifically in terms of policing, individuals may be targeted, not necessarily as a result of suspected wrongdoing, but simply because of their presumed membership in the group. Race, ethnicity, religion, class, gender, language, accent, dress, political ideology or any combination of these factors may serve to delineate the subgroup's characteristics. (Ragazzi, 2016: 728)

The construction of the Muslim "other", due to fears of the presumed threats they pose, has led to an institutionalised form of Islamophobia that can be viewed in much the same way that racism has come to be understood, as something that is structural. As Ismail Patel writes: "Islamophobia is a form of governmentality" (Patel, 2018).

Legalised discrimination: How Islamophobia is institutionalised

Any discussion on Islamophobia must begin with a top-down understanding of how it manifests itself. CAGE takes the description of Islamophobia presented by Narzanin Massoumi, David Miller and Tom Mills in their book What is Islamophobia? Racism, Social Movements and the State as the starting point of our understanding of the phenomenon within the context of our work:

"We regard the state, and more specifically the sprawling official 'counter-terrorism' apparatus, to be absolutely central to production of contemporary Islamophobia – it is the backbone of anti-Muslim racism. An increasingly powerful and largely unaccountable set of institutions, with close relations with multinational technology and security companies, targets 'extremists' and those said to have been 'radicalised', focusing on Muslims in particular. These concepts are imprecisely defined in official discourse. Consequently, the way they are operationalised in the state bureaucracy, together with the routine practices of the police and other public servants, means that many thousands of people in the UK, including non-Muslims, are now regarded as legitimate targets for suspicion, surveillance and intelligence-gathering." (Massoumi et al, 2017: 8)

As mentioned in the previous section, in order to understand the breadth and depth of institutional Islamophobia, it has to first be understood and accepted that Muslims in the UK are perceived as a threat as set out above. This threat is understood in different ways depending on the various aspects of public life in which Muslims operate, but in each context they result in different degrees of 'otherising' them.

It is not just the police at ports, it is education, healthcare, banking and even charity sectors, that all come under the purview of the security lens, creating an environment that Muslims should be constantly surveilled. This is exacerbated by the Prevent policy.

This results in blanket securitisation of a whole community. Ultimately there is little distinction between the Prevent and Pursue parts of counter-terrorism policy, according to Rizwaan Sabir:

Firstly, surveillance generates fear and a threat of violence and therefore has an ability to discipline thought and control behaviour without directly employing force (Foucault, 1977). Since surveillance goes to the heart of Prevent, a highly coercive underbelly is revealed. Secondly, Prevent operates in a complementary capacity to surveillance and intelligence collection that is claimed to be reserved for Pursue. This strongly suggests that the dichotomy between coercion and consent or Pursue and Prevent is false and irrelevant in practice. Thirdly, the surveilling of 'all members of the community' in order to determine which form of activity (or propaganda – see Figure 1 and Figure 2) needs to be targeted at them suggests that Prevent perceives law-abiding Muslims to be somehow susceptible to supporting or becoming involved in terrorism. Such a perception not only has a strong stench of Islamophobia but also shows how the counterinsurgency principle of treating the wider population as an enabler and supporter of insurgency and terrorism has been integrated into contemporary counter-terrorism policy and practice. Such a practice erodes the distinction between civilians and combatants. (Sabir, 2017: 12)

Islamophobia in every sector of public life

Here is a broad overview of the way in which structural/institutional Islamophobia can manifest itself, rippling on from national security policy to various sectors of public life::

•   **Policing** – Whether it is stops and searches or Schedule 7 stops, the role played by police being institutionally ingrained to see Muslims as potential threats is a central means of securitising Muslim communities. (Massoumi et al, 2017).
We note the related finding in the Lammy review into the Criminal Justice System that Muslims constitute 5% of the overall population yet 15% of the prison population of England & Wales (Lammy, 2017).

•   **Law** – Throughout the legal sector there are major issues in the ways that Muslims are denied their due process rights as opposed to other communities. This is most manifest in the range of cases where public interest immunity (PII) is invoked by the government in order to deny appellants the ability to see the evidence against them.
From criminal cases to family law cases, where there is an allegation of national security concerns, the government will often invoke PII in order to present its evidence in secret (Fitzgibbon, 2012). This does not only affect Muslims, but has a broader effect: it renders trials of this nature in violation of the rule of law and is perpetuating the slow erosion of the justice system.

•   **Education** – Muslim students have complained that they feel that the role teachers are being

forced to play under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act (CTSA) 2015 inhibits their ability to express themselves.

This not only dilutes the diversity of the educational space, but further changes the nature of the relationship between teacher and pupil (Faure Walker, 2017 and Rights Watch UK, 2016) into one of suspicion rather than trust.

This is echoed in the findings of recent research by the NUS Black Students' and Women's Campaign, which identified Prevent as contributing towards a deficit in civic engagement for Muslim students; impacting their ability to engage in certain discussions, hampering their political activity and deterring them from running for elected positions (NUS, 2018).

- **Healthcare** – In a similar vein to the application of the CTSA under the previous category of education, the relationship between doctors and patients has been changed by the counter-terrorism role they are being asked to play (Heath-Kelly, 2018). Already Muslim patients have identified how they have been asked questions about their political views, in normal check-ups at GP surgeries resulting in mistrust in a space where, crucially, there should be trust. (CAGE, 2015).

- **Charities** – Muslim charities have raised concerns over the way in which the Charity Commission has taken a securitised approach towards them. This was especially apparent after the former chair was appointed despite his links to a well-known neo-conservative and Islamophobic think tank, and the subsequent employment of former counter-terrorism officials to key posts. This has raised serious questions about the renewed emphasis of the CC on Muslim charities (Patel, 2018).

- **Employment** – Increasingly we have seen Islamophobia creep into the private sector. More well-known cases of a no-hijab rule have now slowly started to become a reality in the UK, following on from a trend in Europe. However, in terms of securitisation, employment tribunals have been given the green light to permit secret evidence to be presented where there are national security concerns regarding individuals. This is a worrying trend for those who are being removed from their positions (Sadiq, 2013) in terms of being able to challenge accusations against them. Again, this is another example of how institutionalised Islamophobia is linked to the erosion of the rule of law.

- **Immigration** – The use of the Special Immigration Appeals Commission (SIAC), the UK government has been able to use a range of civil sanctions to largely impact on Muslims in a national security environment. Of the range of sanctions that are used, they include: passport revocation, passport block for two years to return to the UK, citizenship deprivation and even deportation. Citizenship deprivation is perhaps the most telling as with over fifty individuals having had their citizenships removed, only one known case is that of a non-Muslim. In nearly all of these cases, secret evidence is used by the government to deny the appellant knowing the case against them (Parsons, 2014), another example of a lack of due process.

- **Parenting** – Through statements of politicians to the media coverage of the Muslim community, the role of Muslim parenting has been raised as an issue a number of times within discourses around

security. David Cameron famously highlighted the need for Muslim mothers to learn English as some form of panacea to 'radicalisation' (Abbas, 2018: 163).

Of more concern, are the interventions made by Prevent and social services into the lives of Muslim families, where again, under secret evidence regimes in the High Court, wardship proceedings are issued against Muslim parents where there are allegations of 'radicalisation' (Ahdash, 2018). In short, institutionalised Islamophobia is influencing judicial decisions regarding the well-being of children.

- **Banking** – Attention on Muslim communities, individuals and organisations has resulted in the private sector producing its own databases and matrices of threats that are then sold to both public sector and private sector companies wishing to manage risks. This is exemplified by the exposure of the Thomson-Reuters company World-Check, which routinely used Islamophobic sources for its data on the hundreds of thousands of Muslims on its database. This information was then sold to banks who managed 'risk' on the basis of these assessments (Tamimi, 2017). Again, no opportunity was given to individuals to challenge their designation within this structural Islamophobic lens.

- **Politics** – The space of political campaigning has also been securitised, with political opponents willing to deploy suggestions of compromised Muslim politicians in order to increase their election chances. The most prominent example of this was Zach Goldsmith's campaign for the Mayor of London, where he was willing to cast aspersions on Sadiq Khan's alleged links to 'extremists' (Jones, 2016). These pronouncements both capitalise on and further instutionalise Islamophobia, and normalise it in the public sphere.

- **Religion** – Politicians have made many interventions in relation to the role of religion in the public space in relation to Muslims. Former Prime Minister David Cameron's 2011 Munich speech where he set out his view of good Islam vs bad Islam is an example of state perceptions of what is acceptable belief and what is not, based on Islamophobic assumptions.

Key to the speech is what Professor Brian Klug called Cameron's defence of Islam from 'extremists' as a form disciplining the religion (Klug, 2015). These interventions by senior figures place religious practice through a security lens, which in itself is problematic as such public pronouncements impact three million British Muslims, the vast majority of whom show no support for terrorism.

- **Media** – As mentioned in the section on suspicion of Muslims, the media plays a large role in perpetuating the narrative that Muslims should be viewed through a security lens. A significant example of this was The Sun newspaper's claim in November 2015 that one in five British Muslims supported fighters travelling to Syria to join ISIS.

Eventually The Sun was found to have been significantly misleading in its headline, but it is precisely such inaccurate stories that perpetuate the narrative the Muslims are an exceptional security threat (Rawlinson, 2016) - and regardless of whether they are accurate or not, once such inflammatory statements are published the damage is already done.

How institutionalised Islamophobia is self-reinforcing

All of the above examples are just narrow views into each sector and how Islamophobia has become institutionalised through the lens of national security. In addition to these sectors of impact, institutional Islamophobia has a self-reinforcing effect that follows a certain script.

An example of this is when a threat is reported on in the media, such as the 'Trojan Horse' case, only for the government then to send inspectors in through Ofsted, which then leads to legal proceedings that seek to determine guilt by invoking national security rules and secret evidence, which in turn leads to further cycles of media misrepresentation. And so the cycle continues.

By the end of the process, it is difficult for the subject of the security lens to escape its gaze and impact, often with their lives changed forever.

In his chapter for What is Islamophobia: Racism, Social Movements and the State, Asim Qureshi presents a matrix of counter-terrorism policy and legislation, highlighting how the system can reinforce itself in harmful ways.

Under a system of institutionalised Islamophobia, there is no possibility of an individual under suspicion to ever be able to live a free and suspicionless life. Once inside the net, they are unable to ever sufficiently challenge their position, and are then subject to the coercion of the state:
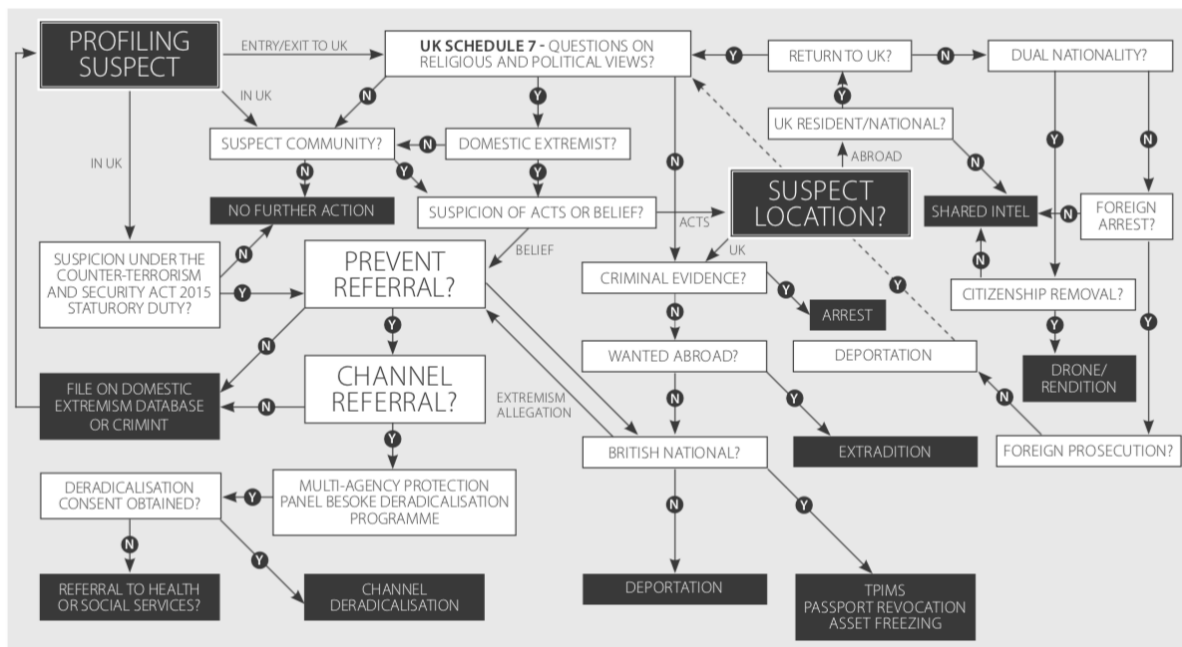

Figure 1: Matrix of counter-terrorism policy (Massoumi et al, 2017: 80)
Concluding his chapter, Qureshi writes:

"There is a cycle of criminalisation within the system. Stops at airports under Schedule 7 powers of the Terrorism Act 2000 permit police and security officials to question individuals about their activities and beliefs. As it is a criminal offence not to answer questions in such circumstances, the ability to not incriminate oneself is removed. A profile is created, which can then be used further down the line, either as part of criminal proceedings or as part of the UK government's Prevent strategy in order to allegedly prevent future harm."

The provisions of counter-terrorism measures in the 'law' provide a legal framework for intervention by the state, but in my view, this amounts to forms of structural violence and racism against communities. It is important to note that in cases such as the 2006 transatlantic bomb plot, and Operation Crevice, the police and the CPS did not need to rely on terrorism legislation and structures to disrupt and prosecute those individuals. They were convicted based on a criminal justice system that was well established, and that also gave the defendants their full rights of representation. The majority of terrorism cases we now see do not involve plots being carried out against the state or public. In fact, terrorism statistics often constitute breaches of Schedule 7 powers for refusing to answer questions or hand over passwords to electronic devices, as well as reading publications considered to be 'terrorist' in nature and quality.

The police should of course do their job to keep the country safe, however it is important to recognise the extent to which the structures of the state and public life reinforce one another in order to produce Islamophobia, particularly when this takes place through the lens of national security, a lens that does not permit Muslims to be equal citizens, but rather only ever seen as threats. This can have a dangerous, counterproductive effect.

Conclusion

As with anti-Semitism, any definition should be able to encompass the powerful and the governed, and all the institutions of state and the private sector. This is key to understanding how there are connections between one form of Islamophobia with another.

Those who challenge the term 'Islamophobia' on the grounds that it silences criticism of Islam, misunderstand the faith. Islam has an extensive tradition of critically engaging with critique of the religion since the time of the prophet Muhammad.

What the term Islamophobia does, is provide an encompassing term that can be used to describe the various forms of structural and real violence that is perpetrated against Muslims, and so it is important to keep using this term in all its breadth so that we may recognise its roots, how it is facilitated and reinforced, and what changes need to be made in order for it to be eradicated.

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Specific Responses to APPG questions

1. Have you adopted a definition of Islamophobia in your line of work, if so what is it?

CAGE have not as of yet adopted a fixed definition of Islamophobia. Our line of work directly involves working with those impacted by state policies that we understand to be Islamophobic in intent, execution and/or inspiration, and which contribute to the institutionalisation of Islamophobia.

CAGE takes the description of Islamophobia presented by Narzanin Massoumi, David Miller and Tom Mills in their book What is Islamophobia? Racism, Social Movements and the State as the starting point of our definitional understanding within the context of our work:

We regard the state, and more specifically the sprawling official 'counter-terrorism' apparatus, to be absolutely central to production of contemporary Islamophobia – it is the backbone of anti-Muslim racism. An increasingly powerful and largely unaccountable set of institutions, with close relations with multinational technology and security companies, targets 'extremists' and those said to have been 'radicalised', focusing on Muslims in particular. These concepts are imprecisely defined in official discourse. Consequently, the way they are operationalised in the state bureaucracy, together with the routine practices of the police and other public servants, means that many thousands of people in the UK, including non-Muslims, are now regarded as legitimate targets for suspicion, surveillance and intelligence-gathering. (Massoumi et al, 2017: 8)

2. What are the consequences of not adopting a definition of Islamophobia, if any

As we foresee it, the consequences of not adopting a definition are the same as the consequences of adopting a narrow definition. Either would allow Islamophobia in its institutionalised and structural forms to go unchallenged, and result in those seeking to hold the state and other institutions to account for discriminatory policies, having their grievances dismissed.

A definition of Islamophobia limited to the interpersonal or individual instances is wholly inadequate to capture the scope of Islamophobia today, and we would warn against adopting any definition that focuses solely on these aspects of it.

Furthermore we believe that not adopting a definition would mean that certain cyclical, often cynical, discussions about Islamophobia – what constitutes it, whether it exists –would continue to take up disproportionate time in the public domain, while the securitization of and discrimination against Muslims continues to go unaddressed.

3. What actions or behaviours are captured by the definition of Islamophobia that you employ?

We again reiterate our understanding that the institutionalisation of Islamophobia, including through the securitisation of Muslims across sectors, is central to the formation and reproduction of

Islamophobia in Britain.

Our understanding of Islamophobia includes a reciprocal relationship between interpersonal Islamophobia – violence and discrimination towards Muslims and those perceived as Muslim – and institutionalised Islamophobia across various sectors, as well as structural Islamophobia that is used to shape state policy and attitude to exclude Muslims from the rights and protections guaranteed to others, both in law and access to services.

An example of this interplay in action would follow as such:

A threat is reported on in the media, such as the Trojan Horse case, only for the government then to send inspectors in through Ofsted who operate from an Islamophobic lens, rendering them unable to understand the situation and make rash, fear-based decisions and pronouncements. This leads to legal proceedings that seek to determine guilt and which may invoke Islamophobic based laws such as the permissibility of secret evidence that the accused cannot see or challenge. This leads to a guilty verdict, which then adds to further cycles of media misrepresentation.

There is no possibility of an individual under suspicion ever being able to live a completely free and suspicionless life. Once inside the net, they are then subject to the coercion of the state.

4. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the definition that you employ

We believe a strength of our definition is that it is sufficiently wide to capture Islamophobia as something that can be advanced by the state and its institutions as well as individuals.

For weakness, we note that other mainstream definitions of Islamophobia are not as thorough, which may make it difficult to communicate across different 'languages' and contexts, as it were, since many of those that might oppose a definition of Islamophobia that takes into account the machinations of government and the media, often stand to benefit from these sectors as they are. These individuals and organisations therefore remain hard to convince.

5. How do the strengths and weaknesses compare to other definition of group-based hatred or hostility eg racism and anti-Semitism

As mentioned before, racism and Islamophobia often intersect and therefore the definitions of them both, currently, do not adequately take into account the levels of discrimination that occur at a structural level.

The construction of the Muslim other, due to fears of the threats they pose, has led to an institutionalised form of Islamophobia that can be viewed in much the same way that racism has come to be understood, as something that is structural. As Ismail Patel writes: "Islamophobia is a form of governmentality" (Patel, 2018).

As far as anti-Semitism, definitions of anti-Jewish hostility, rightly, extend to both the individual and the structural and as a result is largely flagged, controlled and mitigated. What has happened recently, however, is that definitions of anti-Semitism have been politicised and extended to cover critiques of Zionist state policies, despite the fact that many Jews and Rabbis oppose Zionism and actively disassociate from it. However, as a result of the co-opting of the label, the Zionist lobby has in fact blurred its meaning, unfortunately leading to its overuse and trivialisation at time when it is crucial that respect towards the Jewish faith be maintained. As a result, civil society constantly makes efforts to redefine the term and correct this imbalance. It is worth noting, too, that the Zionist state is also deeply Islamophobic, and the relationship between these two forces should also be borne in mind when debating the definitions and implications of both Islamophobia and true anti-Semitism.

6. How useful are current definitions to identifying quantifying and tackling Islamophobia

We challenge the wisdom that Islamophobia, or indeed other structural oppressions, can be easily quantified.

Any quantification is usually achieved incident based and not a measure of the general legal and social atmosphere. This means that figures are gathered through the lens of 'hate crimes' which are reported and logged – we critique this as being reductionist and limiting the scope of Islamophobia to the 'hot' incidents of interpersonal violence, whilst ignoring the 'cool' edge of Islamophobia, as embedded within law and institutions, which prevails.

We find the concurrent drive to quantify the oppression facing Muslims – and inevitably to compare this with oppression facing other groups/communities - as almost trivialising the scope and intensity of Islamophobia.

Furthermore, the fact that Islamophobia straddles the line between a 'race' and religion-based issue, and that fact that Islamophobia draws upon and builds on other forms of racialisation, mean that quantifying Islamophobia can be a difficult task using current limited definitions.

7. What conditions should a working definition of Islamophobia satisfy to be operable across sectors

In order to operate across sectors and thus tackle it at all levels, any definition of Islamophobia needs to humbly take into account the well-documented fact that it has been institutionalised through laws that create an atmosphere where Muslims are treated as suspects and are not afforded the same rights, particular in terms of due process, as other British citizens. This has created an enabling atmosphere of which "hate" crimes are simply a disliked but foregone extension. Until this relationship is acknowledged, the definition of Islamophobia remains incomplete. The symptoms may be treated, but the cause remains unaddressed, and our problems will continue.

8. How useful would a scale of intensity and/or Islamophobia index be for categorising incidents and behaviour as Islamophobic

We are unsure of the use of such a system for valuing Islamophobia, or of such a scale being used for any other oppressions or -isms. Our concern is that such an index could be used to minimise instances of Islamophobia, to specific events without taking into account the prevailing atmosphere, or it could even be used to downplay the impact of it on an individual.

Rather than a scale of intensity, we would recommend that a definition of Islamophobia encompasses all the faces of Islamophobia – the interpersonal, the institutional and the structural.

9. How do we conciliate a working definition of Islamophobia within a rights framework particularly Freedom of Speech

At CAGE we value rights greatly, including Freedom of Speech.

We recognise Freedom of Speech to be one among a number of interlocking freedoms, including the rights to peaceful assembly and association, which collectively allow for the ability to hold power to account – most importantly state power.

We consider the fact that, as a feature of structural Islamophobia, anti-Muslim legislation and the securitisation of Muslims routinely undermine such rights for these sections of society. This should be a concern for all those who truly value rights.

We recognise that concerns are sometimes raised that identifying Islamophobia is somehow at odds with freedom of speech, or otherwise censorious. We do not find this concern to be borne out in reality, and to rather overstate the power of Muslim communities in Britain.

When factoring in an institutional and structural perspective on Islamophobia, we believe that an apt working definition of Islamophobia can help revive and secure rights for all, rather than curtail them.