



16 November 2004

Press Release

POLICE AND MUSLIM COMMUNITIES WORK TOGETHER TO TACKLE ISLAMOPHOBIA

A new scheme to help combat crimes against Muslim communities in Britain gets under way this month.

The 'Islamophobia – Don't Suffer In Silence' Crime Reporting Scheme, a joint project by the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) National Community Tension Team and the Muslim Safety Forum, starts in three London Boroughs, in West Yorkshire, Lancashire and Lincolnshire, with several other forces due to start in the coming months.

50,000 Information packs are being distributed to mosques, other Muslim community venues and police stations throughout the first areas involved, giving information on;

- What Is Islamophobia ?
- What Can I Report, and How?
- A specially designed reporting form
- Police Stop and Search powers
- How to complain against police

The main aim is to encourage Muslims to be more able and willing to report more crimes and related incidents they believe to be directed against them. It is also hoped to encourage further development of links between police and local Muslims; further raise awareness of Islamophobia in the police service; to help police understand the true extent of crime of this type; and most importantly to reassure Muslims that the police service wants to deal with Islamophobia.

There is already close liaison between police and Muslim communities in these areas, but police and community leaders are still concerned that too many incidents go unreported.

The scheme encourages Muslims to report any incident they believe was motivated by faith hate, specifically Islam, whether it was verbal abuse, physical attack, damage, bullying or graffiti, whether it has happened to the person reporting or to anyone else in the community.

Reporting such incidents gives the police valuable information. It may contribute to arrest and prosecution, and enables police to build up patterns of offending and areas of concern, which in turn is important in forming local projects to combat this type of crime.

Mr Azad Ali, Vice-Chair of the Muslim Safety Forum said; "The MSF has worked closely with the Police on the third party reporting scheme and this marks an important start for the police services in tackling the onslaught of Islamophobia that is taking place against the Muslim community. We hope that this can be used as a building block to encourage the Police to take the matter of Islamophobia seriously, understanding how the community is affected and handling the issues with the due respect that it demands.

"We also hope that the Muslim community will find this avenue of third party reporting useful and a means for them to report crimes against them with confidence"

Rob Beckley, Assistant Chief Constable of Hertfordshire, and ACPO spokesperson on policing and faith issues, said; "Many Muslim groups and individuals describe their experience of verbal abuse, minor criminal damage and assaults. However, few of these are formally reported and it is important that we capture what is happening so that we can respond more effectively. While the number of reported Islamophobic incidents is currently low, there is a lot of evidence to indicate that we are dealing with the tip of an iceberg.

"Reporting incidents is, of course, not the complete answer. There is a great deal of good community and police work already going on across the country, but I am convinced that this reporting system will be a valuable complement to our existing work and it will help highlight within the community and the police service the importance of dealing robustly with insidious incidents of Islamophobia".

Several other police forces are already in discussion with local Muslim communities about introducing the scheme in their areas.

[Ends]

NOTES FOR EDITORS:

The first Roadshows to launch the Scheme are taking place as follows;
3pm on 17 November, at the London Muslim Centre, 92 Whitechapel Road, London E1;
6pm on 23 November at the Pakistan Muslim Centre, Woodburn Road, Sheffield, South Yorkshire;
1030am on 24 November at the Jans Conference Centre, The Barge Inn, Higher Audley Road, Blackburn, Lancashire;
12pm on 3 December at the Muslim Welfare House, Seven Sisters Road, London N7;
7pm on 3 December at The Grandstand Community Centre, Carholme Road, Lincoln, Lincolnshire;

For further information on ACPO National Community Tension Team, and for electronic copies of the text of the leaflets, please contact the ACPO Press Office via 020 7227 3405/6, or email 'info@acpo.police.uk'. Further information about ACPO including copies of recent news releases can also be found on website 'www.acpo.police.uk'

The Muslim Safety Forum can be contacted via Abdurahman Jafar on 07905 891299.

FAIR FUNDING APPEAL

FAIR is an independent voluntary sector organisation established for the purpose of raising awareness of and combating Islamophobia and racism, monitoring specific incidents of Islamophobia and racism, working towards eliminating religious and racial discrimination, and campaigning and lobbying on

issues relevant to Muslims and other multi-ethnic communities in Britain.

We have several projects to tackle each of these areas, and we are making a significant progress.

1. Faith & Positive Images
2. Equality Casework Monitoring
3. Media & Popular Culture Watch
4. Policy Research & Lobbying

Further details on each of these projects are available on our website, <http://www.fairuk.org/>

FAIR is always in need of charitable donations in order to continue our work.

Donations of any size are always valued and much appreciated. At the end of every year we will be able to give you a breakdown of exactly where the money you have donated is spent.

To make a donation, please visit our website at <http://www.fairuk.org/howtohelp.htm> or contact us on the details below

FAIR
Suite 11
Grove House
320 Kensal Road
London
W10 5BZ

t: 020 8969 7373

f: 020 8969 7358

e: fair@fairuk.org

w: <http://www.fairuk.org/>

Registered Charity No. 1100985
