

Motion Title: This Union opposes Islamophobia

Proposer: Sayed Ali Akbar Azam

Seconder: Maimuna Bushale (SASS SRO), Ruqaiyah Javaid (SHS SRO)

This Union notes:

1. In Europe, the US and Australia, Islamophobia is on the rise. It has long been fostered by politicians and the media as a scapegoat to justify foreign and domestic policy. Over time, they have fuelled right wing facism and it has become increasingly embedded into the mainstream narrative. This poses a tremendous threat to Muslim students on and off campus.
2. It is important to contextualise the conditions in which Islamophobic attacks occur.
3. Whether that is large scale attacks like the recent New Zealand mosque attack or in the form of visibly Muslim women on campus being attacked, these attacks are a direct result of Islamophobia that exists structurally.
3. This is rooted within the government, institutions, academia, the police and media – shaping the way Muslim communities are constructed, engaged with, and the material conditions that they live in.
4. Practices of the “War on Terror” have included inflicting devastating violence on Muslim-majority nations abroad, coupled with the extension of state and police surveillance to exert control over Muslim communities in the UK.
5. Counter-extremism policies like Prevent have served to cement Islam in the public imagination as inherently violent and inclined towards “extremism”. Muslims are up to 50 times more likely to be referred to Prevent than non-Muslims, with 95% of cases proving “false positives”.
6. Since September 2001, there has been a sharp increase in incidence of Islamophobic hate crimes.

This Union believes:

1. Comments such as Boris Johnson's describing women in Niqabs as “letter boxes”, Conservative councillors calling Islam “the new Nazi” and Sadiq Khan’s comments about areas where there are more women wearing Niqab being hotbeds of extremism, all legitimise that political context that enables and encourages Islamophobic violence in the streets.
2. Think tanks such as the Henry Jackson Society continue to be cited by the University and the SU as evidence for Muslim external speakers being “extremists”, despite being accused of whipping up Islamophobia.
3. That in the field of activism, Muslim students are regularly derided as ‘extremists’ for advocating for particular causes - most centrally, pro-Palestine activism is subject to this smear.

This Union Resolves:

1. To establish Islamophobia Awareness Month as a mandatory, permanent SU led campaign on campus.
2. To oppose all forms of Islamophobia on campus and as part of that, committing to an anti-Prevent stance.
3. To work with Muslim students and groups to get their perspectives and opinions on Islamophobia on campus and how best to tackle this.
4. To introduce training on institutional Islamophobia for FTOs and SU staff, to be lead by Muslim students and FOSIS.
5. To work with Muslim students and groups on campus to develop an action plan to tackle Islamophobia and implicit bias within the SU and University.

6. To hold itself to account for ascribing to Islamophobic tropes such as that Muslim visiting speakers are more likely to be “extreme”.
7. To issue a statement to students to state their opposition to Islamophobia in all forms and its commitment to tackling Islamophobia on campus.