

Press Release

Monday, November 14, 2022

National Association of Muslim Police calls for updating Counter Terrorism terminology

Islamophobia awareness month often highlights issues faced by the Muslim community. This November the National Association of Muslim Police (NAMP) is calling on the Home Office and Police Service to update Counter Terrorism (CT) terminology.

Counter Terrorism Policing (CTP) frequently use terms like 'Islamist' and 'Islamism' to describe extremist ideology akin to groups such as Daesh or Al-Qaeda. In a first of its kind, a 2020 NAMP survey found that 85 per cent of Muslim police respondents and 92 per cent of Muslim community respondents believed that the use of such terminology had a direct link to Islamophobic sentiment, both within the Police Service as well as in our communities.

There is an overwhelming belief that this creates negative bias and stigma through associating Islam with extremism and singling out the term 'Islam' in a manner that is not consistent across other forms of extremism. Consequently, leaving many Muslims feeling marginalised, vulnerable and at a higher risk of hate crime and discrimination.

Research from NAMP specifically identified three areas of concern, emanating from the use of this terminology: **Increased levels of Islamophobia, greater risks of radicalisation, lower levels of trust and confidence.**

This appeal comes as recent Home Office crime statistics for England and Wales reveal that religious hate crime increased by 37 per cent between March 2021 and March 2022 (from 6,383 to 8,730). More importantly, where the perceived religion of the victim was recorded, 42 per cent of all religious hate crimes were targeted against Muslims, accounting for a significant 3,459 offences.

In an attempt to influence positive change and seek to address some of the issues, in 2019 NAMP made a submission to the Home Affairs Select Committee Islamophobia inquiry. This was the first time NAMP publicly voiced concerns with regards to CT terminology. Three years on and Islamophobia is increasingly problematic and CT terminology remains unchanged.

Whilst we continue to push for change, some areas within policing have recognised the concerns that these terms bring and have supported NAMP by being more cognisant of the words they use. "Daesh Inspired Terrorism", "Irhabism" and "Anti-Western Extremism" are some alternative terms which have been suggested by NAMP to replace "Islamism" and "Jihadism".

Alexander Gent, Chair of NAMP, said: "Islamophobia is a significant issue, and the continued use of these terms will reinforce negative stereotypes and discrimination that affect both communities and those working in the Police Service itself.

"Whilst many people understand and support dialogue, we believe institutional Islamophobia is a problem and we strongly urge the Home Office, the National Police Chiefs' Council and police forces, to recognise the gravity of this issue, the negative impact it causes and to seek ways to address our concerns."

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