system. The Commission notes that Muslim pupils usually have satisfactory attainments when compared with pupils in the same schools as themselves but that they are at a severe disadvantage when compared with national norms. The Commission recommends a review of English language teaching. They also recommend that issues of social inclusion and cultural pluralism should be included centrally in citizenship education, that formal policies and guidance should be developed on meeting the pastoral, religious and cultural needs of Muslim pupils in mainstream schools, and that there should be state funding for Muslim schools.

The report shows that anti-Muslim prejudices frequently feature in other religions and mentions an instance of Christian prejudices regarding the proposal to build a new mosque in Chichester. The report also notes, however, that non-Muslim faith communities have often co-operated closely with Muslims in recent years in building bridges of dialogue and mutual understanding. The Commission refers to Muslim and Jewish relations, and to projects which involve adherents of different world faiths coming together to make common cause to the secular world.

The need for legal changes is clearly identified in the report. This, it is argued, will consolidate the changes in public opinion and popular understanding which are required and which are outlined throughout the pages of this report.

Finally, the Commissioners set out their vision for the future and draw together the recommendations which have been mentioned throughout the report. One of the report's recommendations is for The Runnymede Trust to monitor and follow up action.

Members of the Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia

Chair: Gordon Conway

Maqsood Ahmed	Zahida Manzoor	Nasreen Rehman
Akbar Ahmed	Rabbi Julia Neuberger	Saba Risaluddin
Zaki Badawi	Trevor Phillips	Imam Abduljalil Sajid
The Rt Revd Richard Chartres	Sebastian Poulter	Richard Stone
Ian Hargreaves	Usha Prashar	The Revd John Webber
Phillip Lewis	Hamid Qureshi	

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Islamophobia

a challenge
for us all

summary

The Runnymede Trust

Islamophobia: a challenge for us all

In 1996 The Runnymede Trust, an independent research and social policy agency, established the Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia. The Commission, chaired by Professor Gordon Conway, is composed of eighteen members, and is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious committee. A statement from the Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia:

"We are anxious that our report should be a spur to timely action, by many people, in many places, of many kinds. Everyone, we stress, has a relevant and important part to play. Islamophobia is a challenge to us all."

The Consultation Paper

In February 1997 the Commission produced a consultation paper entitled *Islamophobia its features and dangers*. Over 3,500 copies of this were distributed to county councils and metropolitan authorities, police forces, government departments, race equality councils, a wide range of Muslim organisations and a number of leading professional associations, universities, unions and think-tanks. There was widespread media interest.
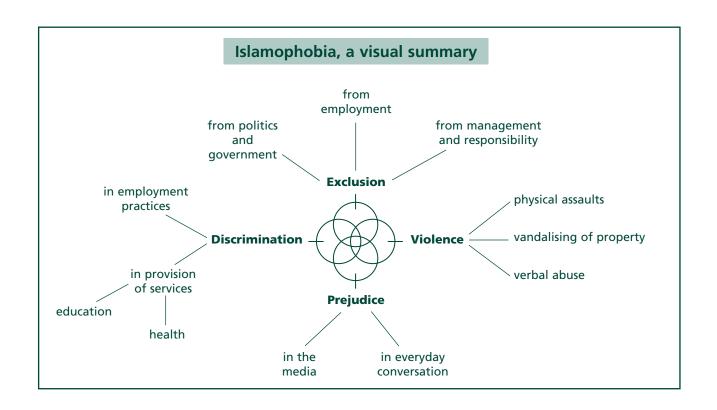
Report Methodology

Building on the consultation paper the Commission has now produced a report entitled *Islamophobia: a challenge for us all*. The report offers a more detailed explanation of Islamophobia. It highlights the consequences of Islamophobia throughout society and sets recommendations for practical action – by government, teachers, lawyers, journalists, and by religious and community leaders.

The methods employed for collection of the evidence was twofold. First, the comments and suggestions the Commission received from the consultation process were used and the report frequently quotes directly from them. Second, the report was produced after members of the Commission visited important Muslim communities in Bradford and Tower Hamlets. This gave the Commissioners the opportunity to engage in direct conversations and discussions with young Muslims in the 17-24 age range as well as with community leaders. In addition members of the Commission addressed a variety of meetings and seminars throughout the country, including a large gathering in the London Borough of Waltham Forest.

The overall intention of the Commission is twofold:

(a) to counter Islamophobic assumptions that Islam is a single monolithic system, without internal development, diversity and dialogue, and;

(b) to draw attention to the principal dangers which Islamophobia creates or exacerbates for Muslim communities, and therefore for the well-being of society as a whole.

Report Outline

The evidence collected is documented in ten chapters and contains sixty recommendations. The report begins by describing the nature of anti-Muslim prejudice and draws a key distinction between closed views of Islam on the one hand and open views on the other. Islamophobia is equated with closed views and eight main features are itemised. The eight features are tabulated below.

The report discusses the history of the Muslim presence in Britain, and outlines problems currently facing Muslim communities, as seen by the younger generation and by leaders and elders.

The role of the media in reinforcing Islamophobia is examined and the responsibilities of journalists are also discussed.

The Commission acknowledges and indeed emphasises that freedom of speech and expression is an essential component of democracy. There need, however, to be certain rules of engagement such that media coverage overall is less distorted and negative.

The Commission notes a particularly dramatic aspect of social exclusion, the vulnerability of Muslims to physical violence and harassment. Their essential point is that whatever the motivations of racist attackers may be, the consequence of this kind of violence for Muslims is that they are unable to play a full part in mainstream society. Racial violence is all of a piece therefore with anti-Muslim prejudice. The key recommendation is that this must be explicitly recognised in whatever new legislation may be introduced. A legal term such as 'religious and racial violence' is required. The term 'racial violence' is no longer adequate on its own. This must also be recognised by race equality councils, housing authorities, police forces, and inter-agency monitoring groups.

The twin themes of social inclusion and cultural pluralism are considered within the education

Islamophobia, a visual summary

Closed and open views of Islam		
Distinctions	**Closed views of Islam**	**Open views of Islam**
1. Monolithic / diverse	Islam seen as a single monolithic bloc, static and unresponsive to new realities.	Islam seen as diverse and progressive, with internal differences, debates and development.
2. Separate / interacting	Islam seen as separate and other – (a) not having any aims or values in common with other cultures (b) not affected by them (c) not influencing them.	Islam seen as interdependent with other faiths and cultures – (a) having certain shared values and aims (b) affected by them (c) enriching them.
3. Inferior / different	Islam seen as inferior to the West – barbaric, irrational, primitive, sexist.	Islam seen as distinctively different, but not deficient, and as equally worthy of respect.
4. Enemy / partner	Islam seen as violent, aggressive, threatening, supportive of terrorism, engaged in 'a clash of civilisations'.	Islam seen as an actual or potential partner in joint cooperative enterprises and in the solution of shared problems.
5. Manipulative / sincere	Islam seen as a political ideology, used for political or military advantage.	Islam seen as a genuine religious faith, practised sincerely by its adherents.
6. Criticism of West rejected / considered	Criticisms made by Islam of 'the West' rejected out of hand	Criticisms of 'the West' and other cultures are considered and debated.
7. Discrimination defended / criticised	Hostility towards Islam used to justify discriminatory practices towards Muslims and exclusion of Muslims from mainstream society.	Debates and disagreements with Islam do not diminish efforts to combat discrimination and exclusion.
8. Islamophobia seen as natural / problematic	Anti-Muslim hostility accepted as natural and 'normal'.	Critical views of Islam are themselves subjected to critique, lest they be inaccurate and unfair.