CERD 2021: Call To Evidence (Specific Focus on the intersections between BREXIT and the rise of religious and racially aggravated crimes)

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Brexit has caused many divides within society, one of these being the safety divide between majority and minority groups. There was an 'unexpected' spike in racial and religious hate crime in the three months after the EU referendum according to the Centre for Social Investigation (CSI) and since then, there has been an increasing trend of racial and religious hate crime.[1]
It is important to recognise that:

a.   The rise in racial and religious hate crime was real, and not due to an increase in public reporting of, or police recording of, hate crime.

b.   Brexit had the ability to cause this increase in hate crime.

c.   Experiences of this hate crime will differ depending upon a person's ethnicity, and the way their ethnicity intersects with socio-economic status.

d.   Brexit will continue to cause an increase in such hate crime.

There has been suggestion from both the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) and the Crown Prosecution Service that the rise in hate crime was not real but was due to improved police methodology[2]. However, when examining the changes made to increase public reporting to the police force, it is evident that they were insufficient to boost reporting of racial and religious hate crime.

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[1] The Independent (2016). *Hate crimes soared by 41%, official figures revealed*. Available from: https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/brexit-hate-crimes-racism-eu-referendum-vote-attacks-increase-police-figures-official-a7358866.html. [Accessed 24 May 2020].

[2] CSEW (2019). *Crime in England and Wales: year ending June 2019*. Available from: https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/crimeinenglandandwales/yearendingjune2019. [Accessed 17 January 2020].
CPS (2019). *Hate Crime Report 2018-19 data*. Available from: https://www.cps.gov.uk/cps/hate-crime-data. [Accessed 30 April 2020].

Theresa May, Home Secretary in 2010, primarily focused on increasing the accountability of the police force through Police and Crime Commissioner Elections, however, the low turnout of these suggests they had little effect on the public's incentive to engage with the police.[3] In fact, 65% of people in the HMIC's 2015/16 investigation of the police felt that methods of local policing had not changed since 2010, suggesting no significant increase in reporting would have been made, and thus, the rise in hate crime was not due to this.[4] This is further evident when considering that 60% of hate crime goes unreported because the victims do not trust the police to act upon their complaint, meaning that the true figures for the increasing trend in hate crime are likely to be more profound. [5] The lack of change within the police force also suggests that better recording of hate crime incidents is not the reason for the increasing figures. The HMIC produced a list of recommendations to be made for efficient crime recording in 2014 which stressed the need for improved efficiency in recording crime[6]. However, the recommendation and need for fully integrated computer systems (which would provide a more accurate recording of crime) was only addressed in the Policing Vision 2025 strategy written in 2016[7]. This specific recommendation was also addressed and accounted for in Metropolitan Police force's bid for £150m funding[8]. Whilst this may address the issue of under-recording and demonstrate a shared commitment of working towards ensuring accurate recording in the build up from 2016 - 2025, it is plausible to argue that no clear attempt to create a well-established digital policing system has been made from 2010-16. This suggests that the rise in racial and religious hate crime has been real and is not attributable to increased recording or reporting of hate crime.

[3] Home Office (2010). *Policing in the 21ˢᵗ Century: Reconnecting police and the people*. Available from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/118241/policing-21st-full-pdf.pdf. [Accessed 17 April 2020].

[4] HMICFRS (2016). *Public views of policing in England and Wales 2015/16*. Available from: https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/publications/public-views-policing-england-2015-16/#feeling-safe. [Accessed 29 April 2020].

[5] The Guardian (2013). *Hate crime in England and Wales: how prevalent is it?*. Available from: https://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2013/dec/17/how-prevalent-hate-crime-england-wales. [Accessed 20 March 2020].

[6] HMIC (2014). *Crime-recording: making the victim count*. Available from: https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/wp-content/uploads/crime-recording-making-the-victim-count.pdf. [Accessed 15 May 2020].

[7] NPCC and APCC (2016). *Policing Vision 2025*. Available from: https://www.npcc.police.uk/documents/Policing%20Vision.pdf. {Accessed 30 March 2020]

[8] Government Computing (2016). *The Met explains thinking behind new integrated policing system*. Available from: https://www.governmentcomputing.com/police-bluelight/news/newsthe-met-explains-thinking-behind-new-integrated-policing-system-4862503. [Accessed 26 May 2020].

To establish whether Brexit had the ability to cause this increase, I examined the motivations of hate crime perpetrators. Research from the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) suggests that there are four main categories of hate crime perpetrator: The Thrill Seeker, the Defensive, the Retaliatory and the Mission.[9] The Thrill Seeker has no particular link to Brexit – these 66% of perpetrators purely commit the crime for the excitement. However, the other three characteristics, which make up a significant 34% of perpetrators, each have motivations with a strong causal link to Brexit, due to their aims to defend territory and remove perceived outsiders. Considering that Brexit has brought to the fore the issue of immigration, and that 73% of those who stated they were concerned about immigration went on to vote Leave in the EU referendum according to the National Centre for Social Research, it is plausible that Brexit caused an increase in racial and religious motivated hate crime.[10] LSE supports this idea. Their research suggests that those who amplify Englishness over their British identity held the harshest views towards immigrants, preferring a hard Brexit that would reduce immigrant rights in Britain the most. This is significant because LSE also found that the 'English only' group scored highest in the 'blatant racist' category, suggesting that those with the harshest immigration views were also most likely to hold racist views and more likely to commit racially/religiously motivated hate crimes.[11] Given the anti-immigration rhetoric in the build up to Brexit referendum and the coinciding increase in racial and religious hate crime, it is likely that Brexit caused this increase.

The impact has not been the same across all ethnic groups. The ECHR's research also found that hate crime perpetrators often perceive immigrants as an economic threat, thus, there are two categories of ethnic minority that are likely to see a rise in hate crime due to Brexit. The first is those that work in industries that voted overwhelmingly for Brexit and the second is those working in industries most at risk from negative economic impacts post-Brexit. Looking at Statista's research, the three industries with the highest vote to Leave were engineering (60.2%), manufacturing (59.9%) and hospitality

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[9] Equality and Human Rights Commission (2016). *Causes and motivations of hate crime.* Available from: https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/research-report-102-causes-and-motivations-of-hate-crime.pdf. [Accessed 7 May 2020].

[10] The Independent (2017). *Brexit: People voted to leave EU because they feared immigration, major survey finds.* Available from: https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/brexit-latest-news-leave-eu-immigration-main-reason-european-union-survey-a7811651.html. [Accessed 15 January 2020].

[11] LSE (2018). Nationalism, racism, and identity: what connects Englishness to a preference for hard Brexit?. Available from: https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/brexit/2018/11/08/nationalism-racism-and-identity-what-connects-englishness-to-a-preference-for-hard-brexit/. [Accessed 26 January 2020].

(58.8%).[12] The industries most at risk are the construction, manufacturing, transport and hospitality industries. [13] The ethnic breakdown of both these industries suggest that the South Asian group is at greatest threat from an increase in racial and religious hate crime. Yet this group is diverse, containing different communities such as the Pakistani/Bangladeshi and Indian communities, who will face different experiences due to two reasons - socio-economic status and religion. Research demonstrates that Pakistani/Bangladeshi people are much more likely to live in poverty and work in low-skilled jobs compared to Indian people.[14] It also suggests that Islam faces a disproportionate amount of religious hate crime, with 47% of religious hate crime being targeted at Muslims in the year 2018/19.[15] Considering that over half of the Islamic population in the UK are from the Pakistani/Bangladeshi ethnic group as found in the 2011 census, it is plausible that this ethnic group has been at greatest threat from the increasing racial and religious hate crime.[16]

Political analyst, Nathan Shoesmith, suggests that the Brexit stances of the two leading parties was the most significant cause for the Conservative Party's landslide majority.[17] Whilst he also argues that Jeremy Corbyn's unpopularity due to anti-Semitism aided the Conservative landslide, this argument is unsupported when considering Johnson's own history of racism and Islamophobia. That Brexit aided the establishment of the current Conservative administration is important because the current Party's intolerance of the Islamic community in particular suggests racial and religious hate crime would be maintained under this government. Evidence for this intolerance includes the thousands of EDL members who became members of the Party in the run-up to the 2019 general election; the Muslim Council of Britain's filing of many reports pertaining to the current governing party's actions, calling for decisive action against Conservative MP, Robert Blackman, after a sixth allegation of Islamophobia

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[12] Statista (2020). *Brexit vote by industry*. Available from: https://www.statista.com/statistics/1072277/brexit-vote-by-industry/. [Accessed 30 May 2020].

[13] BBC News (2019). *UK migration: Rise in net migration from outside EU*. Available from: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-47400679. [Accessed 9 February 2020].

[14] Chapman, S (2015). *OCR A-Level Sociology*. Hodder Education. PG.283-288.

[15] GOV.UK (2019). *Hate crime, England and Wales, 2018 to 2019*. Available from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/839172/hate-crime-1819-hosb2419.pdf. [Accessed 12 January 2020].

[16] Wikipedia (2020). *Islam in the UK*. Available from: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam_in_the_United_Kingdom. [Accessed 25 January 2020].

[17] Shoesmith, N. The Speaker (2019). *How Did The Conservatives Win The Election?*. Available from: https://speakerpolitics.co.uk/analysis/1693-why-did-the-conservatives-win-the-election. [Accessed 20 January 2020].

as of 2020;[18]and the 375% spike in anti-Islamic incidents in the months after PM Boris Johnson compared Muslin women to 'letter boxes' and 'bank robbers', with 42% of offline incidents directly referencing him.[19] The Party's intolerance to Islam further suggests that the Pakistani/Bangladeshi group are at greatest threat from a continued increase in racial and religious hate crime.

As journalist Rachel Shabi puts it, 'Brexit has veered Britain into the worrying politics of majoritarianism'.[20] Action is needed now to prevent this from spiralling out of control. Our recommended actions include:

1. For the police and those professionals tackling crime, to ensure that there is a robust reporting system in place to deal with the evident levels of rising religious & hate crime in relation to Brexit.

2. In Global Britain, UK Political Leaders should take heed from the fearmongering of Brexit and approach social, political, and economic issues with a more nuanced mindset, moving away from essentialist mentality and reducing issues as simply being a result of religion, race & ethnic origins.

3. For all UK mainstream political parties to commit to anti-racism and fully comply and be transparent about investigations into racism and/or xenophobia.

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[18] MCB (2020). *MCB Calls for Conservatives to Finally Take Decisive Action Against Bob Blackman MP Following the 6th Serious Incident Linking Him to Islamophobia*. Available from: https://mcb.org.uk/general/mcb-calls-for-conservatives-to-finally-take-decisive-action-against-bob-blackman-mp-following-the-6th-serious-incident-linking-him-to-islamophobia/. [Accessed 3 July 2020].

[19] The Independent (2019). *Islamic incidents rose by 375% after Boris Johnson compared Muslim women to 'letterboxes', figures show*. Available from: https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/boris-johnson-muslim-women-letterboxes-burqa-islamphobia-rise-a9088476.html. [Accessed 11 January 2020].

[20] Shabi, R. The Guardian (2019). *Racism in political parties reflects persuasive prejudice in Brexit Britain*. Available from: https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/may/07/racism-politics-reflects-pervasive-prejudice-brexit-britain. [Accessed 11 January 2020].