

Integratio Oppportun

Casey Review: Integration and Opportunity

Mariam Sheikh Hakim
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**Christian
Muslim
Forum**

Introduction

A recent review of integration and opportunity has provided the Christian Muslim Forum with an opportunity to explore these issues more deeply and to ask the questions that most concern us.

In 2015, at the request of the then Prime Minister, Dame Louise Casey led a review into integration and opportunity amongst communities in England and Wales perceived to be the most isolated. The review culminated in a widely publicised report *The Casey Review*, published in December 2016.

Integration and opportunity are important issues for us and for our times. There is much that is unspoken and unexplored and, because of this, it can hit a nerve quite easily. We have shared our experiences and observations with one another. This briefing reflects discussions within the Christian Muslim Forum on the implications for British Christians and Muslims.

CHRISTIAN MUSLIM FORUM

The Forum was established in 2006 by the Archbishop of Canterbury, bringing together Muslims and Christians from a variety of denominations and traditions within British Christianity and Islam. The Forum has an extensive network across the country and includes senior religious leaders, scholars, specialists and practitioners.

The Forum recognises differences and common concerns between Christian and Muslim communities in the UK. In the summer of 2016, the Forum developed a new body, made up of Muslims and Christians committed to dialogue and joint working. These people have agreed to meet every two months to look at a particular topic in depth and to listen to the background stories, feelings and needs behind any given public position. We aim to be able to disagree as well as agree with one another publicly, while being willing to articulate the reasons for agreement or disagreement back to our own communities and to a wider audience.

WHO IS THIS BRIEFING FOR?

This briefing is intended to provide members, friends and associated networks of the Christian Muslim Forum with fresh information and thinking on this subject that will affect the sector. It is also available for other organisations and individuals who have an interest in the areas of integration and opportunity: policy makers, think tanks, Government officials, academics, activists, voluntary and community sector networks and local authorities. The briefing is not intended to be the last word on the subject and responses are welcomed.

Context

In December 2016, the launch of the Casey Review received widespread media attention. Its recommendations for Government to tackle segregation and social exclusion, which Louise Casey stated is at “worrying levels” in some areas of Britain¹, was widely reported as well as its strong focus on UK Muslim communities.

The Review found that with the UK experiencing rapid population change, there were large social and economic gaps between ethnic groups; that ethnic segregation is increasing in some areas; and that some women in Muslim communities ‘continue to suffer discrimination and outdated sexism and inequality’².

Highlighting the negative experiences of some Muslim women, Casey stated they were likely to have poor English language skills and more likely to be economically ‘inactive and face coercive control’³. Casey also accused public bodies of ignoring or condoning divisive or harmful religious practices – specifically against Muslim women - for fear of being called racist. “A failure to talk about this”, Casey concluded in her Guardian exclusive⁴, “only leaves the ground open for the far-right on one side and Islamist extremists on the other”.

The Casey Review set out twelve initial recommendations⁵ for action, based around the themes of the review and designed to:

- Build local communities’ resilience in the towns and cities where the greatest challenges exist.
- Improve the integration of communities in Britain and establish a set of values around which people from different backgrounds can unite.
- Reduce economic exclusion, inequality and segregation in our most isolated and deprived communities and schools.
- Increase standards of leadership and integrity in public office.

Reflections

INTERFAITH – GOING FAR ENOUGH?

Although not mentioned in related media coverage, the Casey Review recognises the important role of interfaith work and faith leaders in breaking down barriers to integration and in aiding cohesive communities⁶, and we welcome this.

At the same time, the Review says ‘engagement has particularly highlighted the many intra- and inter-faith disputes inextricably linked to today’s geopolitical crises across the Middle East, and in many parts of Africa and Asia [...] creating or exacerbating tensions between different communities in Britain.’

Deligitimising hate and showing leadership is a key task, given the level of interaction and exchange of messages on social media

It also refers to some interfaith dialogue as ‘amounting to “saris, samosas and steel drums” for the already well-intentioned. These are worthy and enjoyable projects which should continue but they are not enough on their own, nor should they be a substitute for tackling difficult issues.’⁷

It goes on to say some ‘interfaith work not only avoided the difficult conversations that were needed but had also provided an unchallenged platform or legitimacy to those whose views and values actually undermined cohesion.’

In the Forum’s conversations, many of us shared these reservations about the limitations of interfaith work. If it largely involves middle class, liberal and left-leaning individuals, it loses its teeth and becomes ineffective: the purpose of interfaith dialogue is to create change, not just to exist.

Some of us felt that it is unhelpful for Christians to speak as Muslims and vice versa in an attempt to bridge divisions. However, correcting falsehoods when Christians and Muslims are not present to speak for themselves can help to challenge myths

and stereotypes. If interfaith dialogue is “a bunch of people having a chinwag”, it is not voicing concerns or presenting any challenges. There’s a danger of the dialogue sounding like platitudes. Interfaith work also needs to involve ordinary people, not just leaders, if it is to have any lasting impact.

Interfaith work is not only local. We aim to offer a national voice that discusses difficult issues and gets the word out

Interfaith work needs to consider the context in which it operates. Some of us thought the confusion in today’s political climate and unfocused anger makes it difficult to navigate. Much of what lies behind the current climate is creating ‘otherness’ with groups of people. The online world is reality to many who seek information and understanding in this area, so deligitimising hate and showing leadership is a key task, given the level of interaction and exchange of messages on social media, which can act as an ‘echo chamber’ for people’s views.

Interfaith work is not only about faith: recognising the injustice of racism also plays a part in breaking down barriers between communities, as does working for the common good. Some of the Muslims among us told of far right grooming of the white working classes, with very few people challenging it.

We asked whether interfaith leaders and activists were doing enough not just to talk up the ‘positives’ but also to address the ‘negatives’, willing to challenge regressive and intolerant practices and doing enough to reach more ‘troublesome ends of different faiths’.

The assumption that everyone is keen on interfaith activities is unhelpful. Within both Christian and Muslim communities there are those who are afraid that their beliefs may be compromised by engaging with others outside of their community. Some Christian and Muslim groups avoid positive and confident social interaction with each other and their teachings sometimes support this. The interfaith

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work that we promote at the Christian Muslim Forum aims to engage with each other with integrity and acknowledges the importance of challenge, a need to embrace multiple identities, to avoid the mindsets of victimhood or conspiracy and to expose talk of “shared values” when speaking of something that is not really shared.

Interfaith work is not only local. We aim to offer a national voice that discusses difficult issues and gets the message out.

Refreshing, critical spaces where these things can be discussed are vital: places where non-cohesive views as well as complacency about inequalities and discrimination can be interrogated. We have tried to reproduce the challenging yet associative space of the Christian Muslim Forum through our initiatives at a local level.

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Work between Christians and Muslims represents hope, but there’s work to do which requires courage and a recognition of what is needed to bring that hope.

We listened to each other’s concerns and some spoke of their fears that we live in dark times. It’s not just about Muslims, some Christian members of the group said, there’s a lot of room for hate. We should build more relationships, Muslims amongst us said; friendships across faith boundaries are important. False narratives need challenging and our work needs to reflect the multi-layered complexities of real life. There needs to be a balance between criticising people when they are mistaken and of listening to their concerns and affirming positive values. At a local level, the Forum’s Church Mosque Twinning Programme and the Muslim Council of Britain’s Visit My Mosque Day were mentioned as being grounded in real communities, helping to build relationships and challenge stereotypes.

The value of religion in society was affirmed by the group and we welcomed its inclusion in the Review as an important part of national life. Faith is an important component, but not the only one, of a healthy society. Like everybody else, religious or not, we teach our children to tell the truth; but we do it with a difference, rooted in an understanding of God’s nature or attributes, and our accountability to God. Religious communities, at their best, form citizens with a strong moral compass, a desire to be active in society and to support others, to promote justice, to be committed to peace and reconciliation within society and to persevere when faced with obstacles. At their worst, religious communities can be tribal, sectarian, think themselves above the law and breed narratives which foment mistrust and disrespect. In this country, religious communities are resourceful. They are active social networks which enrich the lives of their members and benefit the wider community. As well as their role as places of worship, churches and mosques play a positive role in regeneration, run food banks and credit unions, support newly arrived refugees and are involved in local issues. Initiatives such as the Curry Circle in Bradford, which serves hot meals to the homeless, are led by people who are deeply inspired by their Muslim faith. More could be done on the ground by Christians and Muslims working together on tangible projects to help the homeless and those facing food poverty. Muslims in our group said that there needs to be an acknowledgement that there is much to be learned from Christian colleagues in practical day to day social action work.

DISPROPORTIONATE FOCUS ON MUSLIMS?

In her launch video for the BBC, Casey introduces the report by stating the overall population of Britain is ‘becoming older, less religious, more liberal about things like gay rights and women’s equality. And at the same time, we are much more diverse than we used to be and significantly less segregated’⁸. She then goes on to say, ‘but those in the Muslim communities are somewhat of an exception to that’. The report also mentions the emergence of ‘a

more regressive Islamic religiosity' that is 'creating segregation and pulling communities apart'⁹.

This was the part of the Review that caused the most pain, and indeed division in our group. While none of us dismissed the issues that the Review mentioned in terms of Muslim communities out of hand, most of us felt frustrated that Muslims were, yet again, singled out in the Review and considered to be the main problem with regards to integration. This in spite of multiple surveys showing Muslims' desire to integrate¹⁰, and evidence showing a lack of integration by other communities.

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Some Muslims amongst us said, "We are speaking, but no one is listening. People say, 'They won't integrate'". They felt they are being asked to shoulder the responsibility for cohesive communities when only they are identified as 'not integrating'. Some Christians in the group added that when Muslims find themselves systematically not listened to, people are hurt. Some Muslims said that Christian leaders can and should speak out more fervently against anti-Muslim hatred. There are strong emotions around this and unmet needs, for example the need to be understood.

Muslims are not the only communities in which people's attitudes differ from the overall population. Some churches and other religious groups also are less liberal about issues such as gay rights and women's equality. It may be fair to mention Muslim groups, but not in such a way that gives the impression that they are somehow the country's greatest problem when it comes to integration and shared values. We must be wary also of unsubstantiated myths and stereotypes. Some of us spoke about the role of racism and of anti-Muslim sentiment in relation to people's 'Islamic religiosity'. 'Regressive' practices should be identified and discussed, especially to determine if they are indeed

regressive and a signifier of underlying problems, or are harmless and a matter of perspective.

It is important that Muslim communities, like others, are able to integrate in ways that can maintain their religious beliefs and at the same time become an integral and useful part of mainstream society. We asked whether differences between Muslim and other communities are a result only of religious differences - their "Muslim-ness" - or because of historic, socio-economic and other factors.

There is a huge socio-economic factor which should not be ignored. According to studies, 50% of Muslims live in the 10% most deprived areas of the country¹¹, and the median net wealth of Muslims is around £40k, compared to more than £200k for Christians¹². MP Naz Shah said about the Casey Review, "The real issue is not how people practice their faith, but poverty"¹³. It is possible then that some of the challenges are due to socio-economic deprivation, in part as a result of migration waves, and it is important to recognise the complex mix of achievement levels across both minority and white communities.

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Although we all recognised socio-economic barriers to integration of some Muslim communities in the UK, some of us, including Muslim members of our group, did acknowledge that there are particular issues which prevent some Muslim communities from integrating more than they do, such as high levels of trans-continental marriage. A strong desire for children to spend time each evening in religious supplementary schools was also identified, with the result that these children were not able to take part in sports, music, drama, scouting or other supplementary educational activities which would better foster integration.

We recognised significant differences geographically between northern towns and cities which tend to have less integrated Muslim populations, (which Casey speaks of as though the majority) and communities further south, and particularly in London where there is much more ethnic, cultural and religious diversity in general, including multi-ethnic Muslim communities.

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There is an opportunity to learn about integration from British history, particularly the challenges in Scotland and Northern Ireland, and to ask what factors lead to segregation in the first place

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Some of us, and this included Muslim members of our group, were clear that they are not a ‘one-size-fits all’. Forced marriage, female genital mutilation and honour killings affect a range of communities: some were insistent that these really have nothing to do with faith at all. Others of us, which included both Muslims and Christians, were more cautious about the role of religion more generally in supporting negative cultural practices, even if those practices themselves do not have a religious basis. Still other practices that are out of place in modern Britain do find support in religious texts and traditions. Although many of us felt there was an unfair focus in the Review on Muslims being different from other groups, there was caution from both Christians and Muslims against throwing the baby out with the bathwater. Challenges to Muslim communities should be taken seriously and need a nuanced approach. Muslim women face many obstacles and challenges that affect women from many communities: domestic violence, marriage and divorce issues, economic and social disadvantage. We recognised a need for these to be tackled by Muslims in cooperation with local and national authorities.

The Review’s framing and focus was thought by some to be problematic. It was perceived to have ignored the contribution and successes of British Muslims, the emergence of politically savvy men and women amongst Muslim leaders and networks of

Muslim women who are contextualising Islam in this country. It was also perceived to have ignored the segregation amongst non-Muslim communities, for example in other faith communities, in white working and middle class communities, segregation in Northern Ireland and the problem of “white flight”.

Some Muslims said that there was a suspicion that the Review, without stating it openly, was questioning whether Islam was a suitable religion for UK citizens and that the effect of this was to create divisions, rather than to bridge them.

Fears of a wider agenda were expressed by some of the Muslims amongst us: that the kind of integration desired by some politicians was actually assimilation. There was apprehension that the Review was welcomed by those not known for their acceptance of diversity, for example Nigel Farage¹⁴, and a suspicion that it had been commissioned and written to support what has become a global anti-Muslim political agenda.

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Discrimination against Muslims and the lack of opportunities they faced were not given enough attention in the Review. Some Muslims said that even when out shopping, “People are looking at us Muslims” and that they are experiencing discrimination and marginalisation. Because the data on speaking English was presented as percentages, the fact that a similar number of Muslims and Christians (particularly women) are not ‘able to speak English’ was not made clear¹⁵. It would have been informative, some Muslims said, to look at the nationalities of these people (rather than their faiths) and how long they had been living in the UK. For example, it wasn’t clear if these figures were taking into account newly arrived refugees and those seeking asylum.

All agreed that there were useful and positive recommendations in the Review. Help with community cohesion, including the teaching of

English, and tackling inequality and exclusion was welcome. However, some of us, both Christians and Muslims, were worried about seeming connotations, such as that between Asian and Muslim, which undermined the analysis.

There is an opportunity to learn about integration from British history, particularly the challenges in Scotland and Northern Ireland, and to ask what factors lead to segregation in the first place.

INTEGRATION A TWO-WAY STREET?

'To make men love their country, their country ought to be lovable.' Edmund Burke

Casey states that Muslim communities are becoming 'more concentrated and not less segregated' and that 'people want to live near others that are like themselves'. She says this¹⁶ whilst referencing a Muslim majority neighbourhood in Manchester, living 'cheek by jowl' to a 'white British' community on the opposite side of the road. There may be socio-economic reasons why certain communities are becoming more concentrated and which prevent them from moving away. This is not the same as people making a choice to live where they are.

In general, Christians and Muslims value integration and in our group, the challenge of segregation was acknowledged. Cohesion in a society is a good. A society in which there are suspicions and mistrusts is unstable and may well collapse in times of stress. Segregation is a problem; lives are lived in segregated ways and this is often unacknowledged. Christians said that just because many schools are mixed, it does not mean we have solved the problem. Class plays a part in integration, and some Muslims said, "In middle class streets, you don't see anyone until Christmas". Some Muslims added that no one talks about the problem of the 'white ghetto'; there are parallel lives there too.

Others in our group were more ready to acknowledge that some groups with particular theologies and histories do seem to encourage their members not

to integrate as much as they could. A recent BBC documentary on Deobandi Muslim communities in the UK was controversial in our group, but did highlight tendencies in this regard. Other religious communities such as Strict Brethren or Hasidic Jewish communities have also been charged with trying to keep their members from integrating with wider British society.

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We discussed the reasons that some give for not wanting to integrate more with wider British society. Aspects of majority society that Muslims and other minority communities do not want to integrate into include an over-sexualised youth culture, or an unhealthy focus on alcohol related activities which for some Muslims and some Christians are indicative of a culture and society that has lost its way. Whereas some will feel challenged to change these negatively perceived aspects of mainstream culture, others feel powerless to do so, and therefore feel that their only option is to withdraw into themselves.

Where does the responsibility for integration and opportunity lie? The majority community has a role to play in allowing people to integrate, to enable them to enter the flow of the one-way or two-way street. If thousands of Muslims live in enclaves with their own housing estates, schools and television channels, is this solely a result of an unwillingness to integrate or due to a lack of opportunities and resources? Similarly, is it a problem to be bilingual and have multiple identities and cultures? Is this what is hindering integration? White young people on housing estates are not always interacting with people from ethnic minorities and also need these opportunities.

In contrast to the Review's philosophy of integration which some Christians summarised as "If we get Muslims to speak English, do well at school, move

house, be tolerant, obey the law and get a decent job, all will be well”, Muslims and Christians amongst us said that integration is something for everyone to do and not just the responsibility of minorities. Focusing solely on migrant communities will only get us half way to achieving greater integration. Muslims thought that some parts of the majority population are not doing their bit to integrate either, with ‘white flight’ cited again. Some from rural schools, they said, have been unwilling to ‘twin’ with inner city Muslim-majority schools, and wealthy ‘gated’ communities are designed to keep others out. All communities need to make an effort to engage with one another, the onus cannot just be on one community alone.

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We asked what is necessary for successful integration. Equalities are essential. Some Muslims noted that housing was mentioned in the Review and said that Muslims in Oldham and Rochdale weren’t rehoused for fear of White reaction, and now the inequality has persisted. Christians and Muslims voiced concerns not only about housing policy, but about languages spoken, class differences, job opportunities, and the importance of taking small steps towards integration such as more inclusive ceremonies on Remembrance Sunday. We asked how we could build bridges between a targeted community and those who will be targeting them. Inadequate, inconsistent and piecemeal approaches by Government to integration and opportunity were identified in the Review and we asked how public policy could improve opportunities and facilitate integration.

GENDER DISCRIMINATION AND INEQUALITY

Casey stated her review predominantly found some women in Muslim communities were ‘continuing to suffer discrimination and outdated sexism and

inequality’¹⁷. Much of the media coverage focussed on Muslim women and ‘their suffering’.

Some Muslims and Christians in our group agreed that this was a problem that they had seen in some Muslim communities with some women being discouraged from engaging with others outside of their families and narrow religious communities. When one of our Christian members, for example, approached a mosque to suggest taking a group of young Christian and Muslim adults away for the day in the country to get to know each other better, the mosque leadership said that only young men would be able to go. A Muslim member of the group said that Muslim leadership should include women as well as men.

Concerns were expressed by the Muslims amongst us about discrimination against Muslim women, both within Muslim communities and in wider society. A woman should be able to worship in freedom and not be made to feel that her religion and religious beliefs are targeted by the community at large or by the authorities. The Muslim headscarf or hijab was cited as a prime example: the hijab of the TV broadcaster Fatima Manji should not be the subject of public ridicule and debate if she is to be able to perform her journalistic duties in a satisfactory manner. We are aware of the controversial nature also of a plan in Bradford for a women-only mosque, with the reason given by those campaigning for it that women are not adequately catered for by the existing mosques in the city.

Some Muslims said that many Islamophobic incidents are mainly targeted against Muslim women. Therefore a focus on Muslim women being able to speak English as a conduit for solving integration issues needs to examine structural inequalities and discrimination in wider society. How are women from other faith backgrounds (and none) enabled to be better integrated in society, when they are also facing issues of inequality?

Muslim and Christian women, one of the Muslims in our group said, have a role to play in empowering others and in learning from each other. Government

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and other organisations should work much more than at present with the many capable and engaged women in Muslim communities. Links between Christian and Muslim women can be very powerful. The issue of Muslim women wanting to engage in sports but not wishing to participate in mixed environments is a complex and difficult issue, pitting the values of freedom of religion and gender inclusion against each other both of which are held in high regard in our society.

ISSUES RELATING TO CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

The report has references to some Christian related issues, but they are difficult to find. This wasn't picked up much in mainstream media coverage. For example, the report recognises that 'there has been a shift away from mainstream Christian denominations and a growth in evangelical and Pentecostal churches, largely reflecting changes in ethnic diversity'¹⁸.

It also states elsewhere that there is a growth in 'places of worship for Christian communities outside the traditional categories [referencing Churches]'¹⁹. It wasn't made clear how and why this affects integration in the UK.

We listened to Christians amongst us who also suffer discrimination and lack opportunity: racism and inequality is suffered by Black Christians, and their identity was perceived by some in our group to have been undermined by the Review. Hardening attitudes of white people to Polish or other Central or Eastern European (often Catholic) and other minority ethnic groups were reported by some of us, and this is a threat to cohesion and integration. For example, Polish women are sometimes competing with Muslim women for jobs.

Is there conflation between white and Christian in the Review and more generally? We asked whether a more nuanced approach which acknowledges the differences within Christian and Muslim communities was needed. The Manningham area of Bradford

is mostly Asian, the social housing estates on the outskirts are mostly white, but there are differences and similarities within and between both areas, not least in terms of social class.

Some Christian leaders felt the Review unfairly implied that many of them were promoting 'intolerant and hateful teachings' and that the majority of Muslim leaders were described as liberal when this was not the case.

Muslims and Christians in our group referred to the persecution of Christians in places such as Pakistan. Sometimes this can lead to Christian congregations feeling so upset that it prevents them speaking out against anti-Muslim hatred in this country.

We talked about Christian solidarity with Muslims and asked if Christians have any messages about the discrimination and lack of opportunity experienced by Muslims. Christians said that statements had been made recently by Anglican bishops denouncing the USA travel ban against Muslims from certain countries. We asked if Christians had anything collective to say about the Review, about integration and opportunity and the models of integration already existing. Christians and Muslims asked what theological resources we could draw on.

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Integration was an emotional issue for Christians as well as for Muslims in the group, especially if integration is conflated with secularism. A Christian asked, "Am I expected to leave my identity behind?"
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We agreed that Christians and Muslims can say together: we are committed to social cohesion, we know our neighbour, we are not principally the problem, we have huge resources, we are already part of the solution by being religious. To give one example, we bring up our children to tell the truth and this is a great help to social cohesion.

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integration is conflated with secularism. A Christian asked, "Am I expected to leave my identity behind?" Senior clergy are concerned that a secular orthodoxy may be emerging, and that it's seen as being intolerant if people say anything perceived as going against secular values. Some Muslims wondered whether the Review, in striving for 'one set of values', was trying to come up with new values for secular religion.

Black Christians may also be impacted by the Review findings, as seeming to be not complying with what it means to be British. Christians recognised that, within our communities, if we cannot confront the lack of respect between Black and white Christians, we cannot tell others what to do, so there is work to be done within the churches.

It was agreed that we can correct incorrect messages, for example the blaming of Muslims for decreasing church attendance. Subtle and small steps by Christians can bring people together. For example, Christians suggested that when the churches are asked to take a lead in civic events they can invite Muslims and other minority groups to take part and help civic authorities to understand the reasons that Muslims may not feel comfortable with the way that the events are structured.

EXTREMISM OUTCOMES

Casey states that 'A failure to look at these issues only leaves the ground open for Islamist extremists and the extreme far right.'²⁰

The report also stated 'Faith leadership has not to date been strong enough to counter the vocal minority who are bringing religion into disrepute and influencing the attitudes of people who increasingly regard religion as a force for bad.'²¹

We agreed that conservatism, in any faith, is not of itself a bad thing and shouldn't be confused with extremism. Many of the most conservative Muslims, some of us, both Christian and Muslim, thought, are the most anti-extremist because they understand

the difference between faith and extremism. We asked whether there have been failures to address integration and opportunity and missed opportunities by religious leaders. We do, however, recognise that conservative religious values can be at odds with those of a more permissive wider society.

The Review raised a concern about British Muslims identifying with a global Muslim 'Ummah'. Many faith groups have a sense of belonging to their co-religionists overseas. Most Christians in the group feel a loyalty to the world-wide Christian community, especially when their fellow Christians are being persecuted. They may also feel a particular affinity with fellow Anglicans, for example, elsewhere in the worldwide Anglican Communion, or fellow Catholics in the global Roman Catholic Church.

Being part of the Ummah provides Muslims with an international perspective but does not necessarily preclude them from engaging in British matters. British Muslims can focus on issues at home as well as overseas and this can be done without losing the concept of the global Ummah. Religious and British identities can comfortably sit together without conflict. We recognise that some groups, such as the so-called 'Islamic State', make an explicit point of calling Muslims to leave non-Muslim majority countries out of supposed loyalty to the Ummah. But we note the extraordinary lack of response by the overwhelming majority of British Muslims, led by scholars of the faith, to this call.

Christians in our group are sympathetic to the notion that other religions ought to be able to educate their children according to their teachings. Such an education gives strong identity, which, contrary to some opinion which links strong identity to extremism, makes extremism less of a risk, and gives a strong normative basis for a life of selfless service.

Inequality was felt to be one of the drivers of extremism. Muslims are asked to distance themselves from extremism; Christians in the group felt they should also distance themselves from 'alt right' extremism. We need to be pro-active: whatever

the Government does or does not do, we agreed that Muslims and Christians can promote integration and opportunity. Part of the Forum's role is to provide hope and compassion to people of faith.

REINVENTING THE WHEEL?

It has been suggested that the Casey Review didn't provide any new insight into the subject of social isolation and integration. In fact Casey herself stated when she began the review 'I thought I knew what I would find'²², and that much of this was true.

Lord Herman Ouseley stated in the Institute of Race Relations response²³ that Casey 'says nothing that is new that has not been written on the pages of most English national and some local newspapers'.

We asked whether there was a danger of perpetuating clichés and an 'us versus them' attitude by saying, 'they [Muslim immigrants] need to integrate with us [existing British communities]'.

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Some of us also recognised that, even if there wasn't much new material, this is at least partly because the issues that are documented in it have not been satisfactorily addressed to date. Some of us therefore largely welcomed the report not least for keeping the issues before our wider society.

WIDER CONTEXT, VOICE AND LEADERSHIP

The backdrop of increased anti-Muslim rhetoric in continental Europe, the recent travel ban proposed by the USA and the exclusion faced by Eastern European communities in Britain (especially following the Brexit vote) is a challenge to the hope of integration and is creating unease amongst many British Muslims and Christians.

It was hard for Christians to hear that Muslims among us feel unprotected by the British Government and afraid to exist. For some Christians and Muslims, there is a state of huge fluidity, "things unravelling before our eyes", uncertain as to whether we are on the brink of a re-emergence of the far right into the mainstream. We listened to the need to deal with the challenge of the current situation, whether it is media-driven, deprivation-driven or identity-driven.

Issues of identity and history are more fundamental than the issue of education. There is a real danger of demonising others when we see them as representing those from history who have done "my people" harm. History is critically important: you cannot pull Black history apart from British history and we should learn from Northern Ireland's experience of segregation and integration. We talked about the 2016 Marrakesh Declaration on the protection of religious minorities. Some thought that the Charter of Medina had been superseded by Muslim history and that we were now in a different context. Using the language of a Judeo-Christian heritage excludes other cultures and can be problematic.

We agreed that there is a dearth of opportunity for difficult conversations to take place. The Forum's group is one of these opportunities and it is a refreshing space, and is not just about Islam. It's a lack of these spaces which promotes segregation.

We learn a lot in a safe - a brave - environment where challenges can be made without threat, where relationships across divisions support the rigours of hard-hitting conversation. "Let's invite others into this 'critical space'." We need to bring our communities together authentically, and articulate our thoughts on this.

Citizenship and civic involvement is important. A top-down approach to integration or the imposition of uniformity is unlikely to work: no one group has the answer, it needs everyone to play their part.

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Respect for others is vital if we are not to demean and cheapen one another. Do Christians respect Muslims? Do Muslims respect Christians? Do secular-minded people respect religious people? We need proper leadership on this issue
.....

Muslims? Do Muslims respect Christians? Do secular-minded people respect religious people? We need proper leadership on this issue. What kind of alternative leadership can we offer? We can influence mosques and churches up and down the country and it would be disappointing if faith groups did not play a real role in addressing these issues. Some Christians are disappointed in what they see as an insufficient response from Christian leaders to anti-Muslim rhetoric. This is particularly painful when the rhetoric is given a Christian flavour or is proclaimed in the name of the church or the Christian gospel. The narrative that all Muslims are potential terrorists must be challenged. "If the loudest voices are evil, we need loud voices that care and love." The absence of these voices is as much of a contributor as the presence of the others.

Going down a simplistic route would be disappointing. We have the possibility of inviting greater inquiry to understand the complexity of this issue, rather than accepting the analyses so far presented. What do we know? We have many questions but we do know that a lack of education about "the other" is a problem, and that knowing someone personally breaks down barriers and helps integration.

What can we do about integration and opportunity? We are part of the solution, through the many faithful lives lived out in Britain and through our institutions and networks. It is vital that religious leaders show solidarity and not complacency on issues of importance. We can provide our own analyses, hope, theological learning and institutional resources to improve integration and opportunity.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Where does the responsibility for integration and opportunity lie?
2. What factors lead to segregation in the first place?
3. What models of integration have worked?
4. How can British history help us understand the complexities involved?
5. These topics uncover deep emotion; how can associative spaces such as the Christian Muslim Forum bring together people with divergent views?
6. When some Christians and Muslims lack opportunity and sense that they are not being listened to, is there scope for working together on this?
7. What kind of leadership can mosques and churches offer? How might this work with Government initiatives to promote integration and opportunity?

Footnotes

¹ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-38200989>

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/casey-calls-for-integration-plan-to-bind-communities-together>

³ As above

⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/dec/04/tough-questions-social-integration-laws-values-every-person-britain>

⁵ The 12 recommendations are included in Resources at the end of this briefing

⁶ Pg. 16 & pg. 124 https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/575973/The_Casey_Review_Report.pdf

⁷ Pg 149 As above

⁸ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-38200989>

⁹ Pg. 128, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/575973/The_Casey_Review_Report.pdf

¹⁰ 'Unsettled Belonging: A Survey of Britain's Muslim Communities', Policy Exchange, December 2016 https://policyexchange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/PEXJ5037_Muslim_Communities_FINAL.pdf

¹¹ <http://www.mcb.org.uk/muslimstatistics/> British Muslims in Numbers, Muslim Council of Britain, 2015

¹² <http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/research/SocialSciences/Key-Facts-Background-Paper-BPCIV.pdf>

¹³ <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/dec/18/naz-shah-mp-bradford-british-muslim>

¹⁴ Nigel Farage tweeted about the Casey Review "Excellent report out by Dame Louise Casey. Much of what I have been saying for years"

¹⁵ Muslims were 282,136 (16%) and Christians were 257,785 (1%)

¹⁶ BBC, Segregation at worrying levels of Britain (Louise Casey's launch video on Daily Politics Show)

¹⁷ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-38200989>

¹⁸ Pg. 123, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/575973/The_Casey_Review_Report.pdf

¹⁹ Pg. 125, as above

²⁰ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-38200989>

²¹ Pg. 121, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/575973/The_Casey_Review_Report.pdf

²² <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/dec/04/tough-questions-social-integration-laws-values-every-person-britain>

²³ <http://www.irr.org.uk/news/dangerous-casey-failing-and-blaming-victims/>

Resources

RESPONSES TO THE PUBLICATION OF THE CASEY REVIEW

The Challenge, *Release of government report into integration imminent*, Nov 2016

LSE, *Absent experts and public debates about integration*, Dec 2016

Runnymede Trust, *Equality Not Finger Pointing: Response to Casey Report*, Dec 2016

The Catholic Church of England & Wales, *Casey Review*, Dec 2016

Race Equality Foundation, *Response to the Casey Review*, Dec 2016

Muslim Council of Britain, *Response to Casey Review*, Dec 2016

IPPR, *Dangerous Casey, failing and blaming victims*, Dec 2016

New Horizons, *Let's get real about integration*, Dec 2016

Faith Matters, *Casey Review Highlights a Number of Alarming Areas Around the Lack of Integration*, Dec 2016

MEDIA COVERAGE

BBC, *Segregation at worrying levels of Britain* (Louise Casey's launch video on Daily Politics Show)

Yorkshire Post, *Toby Howarth and Qari Asim: It is the duty of all of us to help build cohesive society*

The Guardian, *White people must play a role in integration, too*

The Daily Telegraph, *Muslims are failing to integrate*

The Guardian, *Sorry, Louise Casey, but Muslim women are held back by discrimination*

The Independent, *Theresa May's government condemned*

Prospect Magazine, *Louise Casey Review III Conceived*

The Guardian, *Assimilation threatens the existence of other cultures*

The Guardian, *'I'm sick of being told I don't get on with people'*

The Guardian, *Casey review raises alarm over social integration in the UK*

Casey Review Recommendations

(concise version)

1. Support area based plans
2. Collect indicators of integration breakdown
3. Develop a toolkit of good practice
4. Promote British values more strongly in schools
5. Improve integration support and expectations for migrants
6. Review citizenship requirements and consider an integration oath on arrival
7. Increase integration in schools
8. Tackle cultural barriers to work
9. Support English language skills
10. Review housing and regeneration policies
11. Improve safeguarding for children outside mainstream education
12. Raise standards of integrity in public life and introduce a values oath

Christian Muslim Forum



A group of Muslims and Christians from different backgrounds were invited to gather in Manchester in August 2016. Since then, they have continued to meet at Lambeth Palace and in other places. They have a wide range of expertise and are committed to mutual understanding.

The group is intentionally broad and the members are deeply rooted in the realities of Muslim and Christian life in this country. The purpose of the group is not to identify the correct Christian or Muslim stance but to reflect and articulate the range of current views and concerns with integrity, recognising areas of shared interest as they emerge.

Members of the group seek a more nuanced understanding of each other and to handle disagreement wisely when views conflict, challenging assumptions and taking the opportunity to gain insight. Listening to the underlying complexities behind strongly held opinions, they are able to interpret what they learn back to their own communities.

Meeting every two months, the group works together and with expert witnesses to understand topics of concern. The group is producing briefings which reflect the different views held, as well as areas of agreement, as a contribution to the public debate and as an expression of the Forum's charitable objectives.

The briefings are available to those working in government, the media and policy-making as well as academic and religious institutions. Launch events invite responses from those closely connected to the theme. Members of the group may write or speak on the subject matter and the briefings are shared with their own religious communities. Feedback and further reflection is welcome and will help to guide future priorities.

Christian Muslim Forum

Christian Muslim Forum
200a Pentonville Road
King's Cross
London
N1 9JP

020 7832 5841

07903 682 142

www.christianmuslimforum.org

[@chrimusforum](https://twitter.com/chrimusforum)