



Boris Johnson and Discrimination

09 August 2018

Dear Sirs,

RE: Boris Johnson and discrimination

We are writing to express our concern and outrage at the comments of Boris Johnson concerning the niqab/burka that is worn by some Muslim women.

While whatever item a woman chooses to wear or not wear is a choice freely available to them in Britain, on 6 August 2018, Boris Johnson, Conservative Member of Parliament for Uxbridge and South Ruislip, and hitherto UK Foreign Secretary, wilfully described Muslim women wearing the niqab as looking like a "letter box" and "bank robbers".

Mr Johnson's comments are deeply offensive and discriminatory. In targeting and singling out Muslim women, he has clearly treated them less favourably than women of other faiths and backgrounds, which is unlawful direct discrimination under Section 13 of the Equality Act 2010 on the grounds of the protected characteristics of sex and/or religion.

In addition, his comments are entirely unacceptable because their design and purpose in violating the freedom and dignity of the Muslim women in question only perpetuates the hostile, intimidating, degrading and/or humiliating environment that is fast becoming the norm for British Muslims, and women in particular, and which constitutes unlawful harassment under Section 26 of the Equality Act 2010.

We have little doubt that Mr Johnson's words only serve to further embolden the racists, xenophobes, and Islamophobes in our society through an entirely malicious ploy to influence and coerce through fear or intimidation, and thereby bullying contrary to the Code of Conduct for Conservative Party Representatives [1]. Furthermore, his actions have brought the Party into disrepute.

As a bearer of public office, Boris Johnson is acutely aware of his public following and therefore civic responsibilities and the perilous implications of these comments. We call on the Conservative Party to take immediate and robust action against Mr Johnson to serve as an abiding example of what we would hope is the Conservative Party's publicly stated aim of eradicating Islamophobia from within its ranks and from society. We also call upon the Party to show its sincere commitment to tackling Islamophobia by stating so in its Codes as it has done with anti-Semitism

We look forward to hearing from you with a detailed response to this complaint. We will also be taking this matter up with the Conservative Party of Lewisham.

Yours faithfully

Lewisham Islamic Centre

[1] <https://www.conservatives.com/codeofconduct>