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The Commission for Countering Extremism (CCE) or McCarthyism

The Government recently announced the appointment of a commissioner for the CCE.

It is rather disconcerting that there is no agreed definition of the very thing that is supposed to be countered - 'extremism'. On this ground alone, the CCE should be viewed as fundamentally flawed and irrational. What processes are in place to prevent the censoring of mainstream political and religious views that an elite minority simply disagrees with?

We believe that the minority Muslim community will be unfairly targeted and indirectly discriminated against. As hate crimes against Muslims soar, it is our belief that such a commission could further incite distrust and undermine Muslim leaders and civil society.

It is our concern that the CCE will become a witch hunt that could ensnare politically active British Muslims and civil society groups that work to protect the community's rights. The notorious committee hearings and investigations by Senator Joseph McCarthy in America in the 1950s into suspected Communists represented some of the most severe political repression in American history and destroyed lives. Today, as falsehoods are spread quickly on the internet and accepted as true, this risk may be even more acute.

In view of the above, we call for the Government to listen to the overwhelming majority of mainstream Muslim leaders who have expressed their concerns about the CCE and we agree with the sentiments of journalist Peter Hitchens who can see no basis for the existence of such a Commission and accordingly, we call on the government to genuinely rethink the CCE.