

Causes and Process of Radicalisation among Young Muslims in Leicester (UK)

Understanding Muslim community perspectives on political mobilisation and violent extremism is an important but complex issue in Britain and Europe. Too often peaceful Islamic belief, practice and thought has been conflated with violent radicalisation and Islamically inspired political violence, not least because few researchers and commentators have engaged in research that listens to young Muslim's own views on these issues. While there exists



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a very real threat of violent extremism in the UK this threat comes from an extremely small minority, and many young Muslims feel as though they are under constant surveillance and scrutiny despite rejecting any form of political violence. These same



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young people also often feel as though their own individual efforts to empower communities to be resilient against violent radicalisation and violent extremism aren't being understood and/or heralded by non-Muslim communities, politicians and the police and security services. This project will seek to act as a corrective to this neglect of Muslim community perspectives on issues of radicalisation and violent extremism – by conducting a series of qualitative structured interviews with young Muslims, their parents, community social workers and Imams from Leicester (UK).

This project will build upon and work with the current *Qualitative Research on European Medium-size Cities* research project being conducted under the auspices of Centre for Studies in Islamism and Radicalisation (CIR) at the Department of Political Science, Aarhus University (Denmark). The broad idea of the overall project is to undertake a comparative study on the issue of radicalisation amongst a range of young Muslims living in Europe. The UK component of this project will be conducted in Leicester, a city comparable in size to Lille (<280,000 inhabitants in the city, and a total of <450,000 in the wider Leicester urban area) with a massive Muslim population. Leicester was selected for several key reasons including it's comparability to other cities selected for the *Qualitative Research on European Medium-size Cities* research project, and its high density of a diverse Muslim population, including many sects of Islam (Sunni, Shia, Salafi, Barelvi, Deobandi etc.), and many different stories/generations of immigration (ranging from Asians who migrated to the UK in the 1950's and 60's, to more recent Somali immigrants to the UK).

We hope that this study will ultimately help to fill out what is often a patchy and incomplete picture of what radicalisation means to and for young Muslims living in

Britain. By listening to these perspectives, we hope the project will be able to make important intellectual and policy making contributions to how we should think about violent extremism and violent radicalisation, and how we, Muslims and non-Muslims alike, can best tackle it.

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