



The grassroots voices of British-Pakistanis

2013 - 2014

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Jawaab

The grassroots voices of British-Pakistanis on identity, human rights and crime

2013 - 2014

Executive Summary

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Rizwan Hussain



Jawaab

Our Vision

Jawaab is working towards a world free of social oppression, xenophobia and inequality.

Our Mission

Jawaab is a grassroots movement challenging social and political issues, primarily affecting Muslim communities.

Our Main Value

Jawaab recognises that religion is not the only facet of society; Jawaab is an all-inclusive organisation, engaging with a range of people from faiths and non-faith backgrounds, cultures and ethnicities.

Our Aims

1. To raise awareness on socio-political issues, challenge xenophobia and social oppression.
2. Break down negative misconceptions and preconceived notions about minority and faith communities.
3. To mobilise a movement, offering a platform and a voice to marginalised communities and those that share their concerns.

How do we do this?

1. Grassroots campaigning

We engage with disaffected communities and minority groups on specific social and political issues. We listen, explore and give them a space to voice their feelings and concerns. We research into specific issues through reports, polls, questionnaires, focus groups and general outreach.

2. Creative campaigning

Through creative methods such as documentary filmmaking, arts, photography, animation, social and digital media, we work with communities to offer them a platform to express themselves. We record their stories to gain a real understanding of their experiences and views and communicate this to a wider audience online.

3. Informative campaigning

We inform media, government, community and faith leaders, statutory and voluntary organisations of the outcomes of our work (or campaigns) to spread the message of what grassroots communities are saying and feeling. Of what could be changed to improve their lives and society.



Executive summary

Introduction

The 7/7 attacks led the media, the police and politicians to question the loyalty of UK Muslims, in particular British-Pakistanis. The Pakistani diaspora is the largest Muslim group with over one million (2011 Census) residing in the UK. In recent years, British-Pakistanis have been under intense media and government scrutiny.

The escalation of the War on Terror and the home grown terrorist threat pushed the Pakistani community into intense media spotlight. One of the challenges for young British-Pakistanis is how to juggle their identities, being British and Muslim, while simultaneously defying prejudices about the religion of Islam.

Acknowledging the complexities of cultural traditions, emotional struggles, societal pressures, and balancing a religious identity within the wider social and political context, allows for more challenges to be identified.

However, our research shows there is a void in grassroots representation of the Pakistani community through the media and at local and national governmental level. The British-Pakistani community's sentiments on various subjects are not being voiced. This is marginalising the next generation of British-Pakistanis across the UK. If platforms are not provided for open debate and discussion, then further problems and challenges will arise.

Through this project, Jawaab recognised there was a great need to engage with this community. Whether the issues are rooted in the UK or Pakistan, they subsequently impact on Britain's Pakistani diaspora. By providing the opportunity to speak on apolitical grounds and in an open, neutral forum, Jawaab explored and challenged common beliefs and assumptions.

This report aims to provide a snapshot of what British-Pakistanis at grassroots are thinking and feeling on various subjects. These are the voices that are being ignored while the media publicly assassinates the morality and ethics of this community. The Pakistani community are being stigmatised due to a small minority of individuals who preach hate or commit crimes. This is being picked up by certain media who choose to stereotype and sensationalise, and who are grossly misrepresenting the community. It is clear from our work that such individuals do not represent their communities and that the media portrayal is fuelling hatred towards British-Pakistanis.

Jawaab toured three cities with large concentrations of British-Pakistanis: Birmingham, Manchester and Bradford. These cities have been in the media spotlight for crimes associated with the Pakistani community. The following topics were explored in detail:

Identity: youth identity, nationalism, caste system, religion

Human Rights: minority rights, women's rights, forced marriages

Crime: terrorism and sexual grooming gangs

Key Recommendations

Jawaab is calling on community activists, religious leaders, politicians, journalists, national and international government, grassroots organisations, charities, advocacy and lobbying groups to understand the thoughts and feelings of the British-Pakistanis.

These key recommendations need to be raised in the wider public's awareness.

It should also help organisations, government departments, community activists and religious institutions to be able to grasp a strong understanding of what British-Pakistanis are thinking at grassroots.

Media

1. Certain media outlets need to stop reporting on issues as existing only in the Muslim/Pakistani community. Particular media outlets need to act responsibly when reporting on stories which can lead to the demonisation of an entire group or community, biased reporting on terrorism and grooming gang's fuels hatred towards the Muslim/Pakistani community.
2. There needs to be an initiative where members of the community can become equipped with the necessary verbal, writing and lobbying skills to challenge the media.
3. Opportunities need to be created for the British-Pakistani community to be their own advocates and to publically articulate their views and perspectives.
4. The British-Pakistani community would like to see a more nuanced portrayal of Islam, based on deeper understanding of the faith and the differences between cultural practices and religious teachings.

Community and Faith Involvement

1. Intergenerational conflict needs tackling through dialogue. Parents and imams need to do more to openly address topics such as sex, honour, forced marriages, caste, women's empowerment, identity and minority rights. This will break the taboo attached to such issues and allow people to tackle them head on.
2. There is a need for more community and social faith spaces where British-Pakistanis can discuss traditional values to dispel common misconceptions, but also form positive relationships. Community spaces to be forums for promoting a holistic positive message through British, Pakistani and religious values.
3. Imams must aim to educate the British-Pakistani community and wider British society through Islamic theology and the teachings of the Prophet Muhammed (peace be upon him). Islam promotes tolerance, humanity and justice, not separatism and extremism.
4. There needs to be a forum where issues of radicalisation, integration, Islamophobia and multiculturalism can be discussed on a national level.
5. There needs to be initiatives and programmes introduced to promote the importance of Muslim women being educated and valued in society.

Government

1. There is a need for UK and Pakistan's government to set up initiatives where active campaigners from the UK can be brought together. This will allow for more collaborative and representative efforts in understanding, learning and alleviating problems such as regional identities and minority rights. There needs to be spaces free from prejudice for progressive dialogue for the rights of minorities.
2. Foreign policy remains an issue for the British-Pakistani community, in particular the British-Pakistani youth. This issue needs to be reviewed as it causes unrest among British Pakistanis and is contributing to the radicalisation of a minority in the community. Government needs to liaise more closely with grassroots organisations in order for British-Muslims to feel part of the policy-making process.

Professionals

1. Schools, social and youth provisions, police and local authorities have a responsibility to safeguard the vulnerable in their society from all backgrounds. There needs to be more understanding and education between these organisations and the community, to build trust and collaborative working.
2. Grassroots leadership programmes need to be implemented in order to empower and support British-Pakistani/Muslim females to become leaders. There needs to be a willingness to promote this voice and take it seriously within the British-Pakistani community and British society as a whole.
3. Institutional racism is a major issue causing distrust among British-Muslims. Agencies and communities need to establish meaningful dialogue and ensure that they work to fulfil the guidance and legislation that is already in place.

Conclusion

This report highlights the need for a social platform, through local and national grassroots and digital campaigns, where minority communities can come together to openly talk about challenges, barriers and aspirations. The British-Pakistani community, professionals and local authorities need to work with religious establishments in order to provide a meaningful platform of dialogue and engage in particular with the younger generation of the community.

This report exemplifies the need for grassroots dialogue and campaigning, without which communities will continue to feel disenfranchised. Without their input, local authorities cannot meet their needs causing further tensions and lack of understanding. Without the voice of local communities, the government cannot introduce the right measures.

Our aim is not to lose momentum as British-Pakistanis have a great deal to say. We intend to facilitate discussions and debates to take this research forward. We want British-Pakistanis and Muslims to have a meaningful voice and influence in policy making.

It is crucial we all collaborate to harness and apply the thoughts and feelings of this long misunderstood community.