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Islam on Campus: A survey of UK student opinions

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Islam on Campus is the most comprehensive survey ever undertaken of Muslim student opinion in the UK, based on a specially commissioned YouGov poll of 1400 students, fieldwork and interviews.

The report examines students' attitudes on key issues including religious tolerance, gender equality and integration. While the majority of Muslim students' support secularism and democratic values, are tolerant towards other groups and reject violence in the name of their faith, *Islam on Campus* has also uncovered significant findings.

Killing in the name of religion:

- Just under a third of Muslim students polled (32%) said killing in the name of religion can be justified – the majority of these said killing could be justified if the religion was under attack, and 4% of all respondents supported killing in order to promote and preserve that religion.
- 60% of active members of campus Islamic societies said killing in the name of religion can be justified. By contrast, only 2% of non-Muslims agreed.

Apostasy:

- Half (50%) of Muslim students polled said they would be unsupportive of a friend's decision to leave Islam. A quarter (25%) said they would be supportive.
- Almost half (45%) of Muslim students polled said that apostates should be encouraged to reconsider their decision by Muslim elders and people that care about them.
- A minority (6%) said that apostates should be "punished in accordance with Sharia."

Views on women:

- Almost a quarter (24%) of Muslim student respondents do not feel that men and women are fully equal in the eyes of Allah.
- Female students (38%) were also more likely than males (27%) to perceive inequitable treatment of men and women in their local communities. While 37% of male Muslim students felt men and women were treated equally, only 26% of females felt the same.

- The majority (89%) of Muslim students polled said that men and women should be treated equally, 5% said they should not and 6% were unsure.
- Nearly three fifths (59%) of Muslim students polled felt it was important to Islam that Muslim women wear the hijab.
- Active members of university Islamic societies (51%) were over twice as likely as non-members (25%) to agree that “women should wear the hijab – female modesty is an important part of Islam.”

Support for Sharia law in the UK and a worldwide Caliphate:

- Two fifths (40%) of Muslim students polled supported the introduction of Sharia into British law for Muslims.
- A third (33%) of Muslim students polled supported the introduction of a worldwide Caliphate based on Sharia law. A majority (58%) of active members of campus Islamic Societies supported this idea.

Islam as a political project:

- Over a sixth (15%) of respondents said that Islam as a religion and Islamism as a political ideology were part of the same thing, and that politics is a big part of Islam. A quarter of active members of campus Islamic Societies agreed.
- Over half of Muslim students polled (54%) were supportive of an Islamic political party to represent the views of Muslims at Parliament. By contrast, over half (61%) of non-Muslims polled were unsupportive.

Compatibility of Islam with secularism and democracy:

- Over two fifths (43%) of Muslim students polled said Islam was compatible with secularism. Almost three in ten (28%) said they were incompatible and a further 29% were unsure.
- Over two thirds of Muslim students polled (68%) said Islam and the Western notion of democracy were compatible, with older students (age 35-54) being more likely (78%) than younger students (age 18-35) (67%) to agree. Active members of campus Islamic Societies (84%) were more likely (64%) than non-members to support this idea.
- Over three quarters of respondents (78%) said that it was possible to be both British and Muslim equally. Female Muslim students (81%) were more likely than males (73%) to say it is possible to be both British and Muslim equally.

Isolation on Campus:

- 8% of Muslim students agree that “Most of my friends at university are Muslim because I have more in common with them than I do with non-Muslims”. However, this rises to 25% when active members of campus Islamic Societies are asked.
- 40% of Muslims said that they thought that it was unacceptable for Muslim men and women to mix freely.

Sectarianism:

- Nearly a third (30%) of non-Shia respondents agreed that minority Shia Muslims are not true believers in Islam, as compared to 15% of non-Sunni students who were hostile to the notion that majority Sunnis are true Muslims.

Attitudes towards homosexuals and Jews:

- A quarter (25%) of Muslim students polled said they had not very much or no respect at all for homosexuals, as opposed to 4% of non-Muslim students polled.
- Male Muslim students were the most likely to be intolerant of homosexuality: male Muslim respondents (32%) were much more likely than female Muslim respondents (19%) to have little or no respect for homosexuals. Amongst non-Muslims polled, the percentages of males and females saying the same were 4% and 3% respectively.
- Almost one in fifteen (7%) Muslim students polled said they had not very much or no respect at all for Jews. Four out of five (79%) Muslim students polled, however, said they respected Jews.

Iraq war has damaged Muslim respect for British government:

- Two thirds of Muslim students polled (66%) said they had lost respect for the British government because of the invasion of Iraq. Separately, 20% also said that their respect for British society as a whole had decreased.
- However, nearly a third (30%) of Muslim students polled said their respect for British society had increased based on the public's (largely negative) reaction to the Iraq war.
- 57% of Muslim students polled said that British Muslim servicemen should be allowed to opt out of taking part in military operations in Muslim countries, compared to a large majority (71%) of non-Muslim respondents who said they should not.

Hostility towards Muslims:

- 9% of non-Muslims said they had "no very much or no respect at all" for Muslims. By comparison, only 4% did not respect homosexuals and 3 percent did not respect Jews.
- 76% of non-Muslims said that in their understanding of Islam men and women are not considered "equal in the eyes of Allah".
- 9% of non-Muslims polled said that they thought that Muslim men and women were treated equally in their local communities.
- 50% of non-Muslims also said that they thought that Islam was "very or fairly" incompatible with democracy.
- Over half (55%) of non-Muslims polled said that Islam and the separation of religion and government were incompatible, while a fifth (20%) said that they were compatible.