



Civil Service



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MUSLIM NETWORK

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To: Civil Service Muslim Network members  
Head and members of Departmental and Agency Muslim Networks  
All colleagues, leaders and managers

cc: Alex Chisholm,  
Civil Service Chief Operating Officer and  
Diversity and Inclusion Champion

Sir Richard Heaton KCB  
Ministry of Justice Permanent Secretary  
Civil Service Race Champion

(by email only)

10 June 2020

As'salaam alaikum/may peace be upon you all,

**Black Lives Matter: Action Plan to tackle bias, discrimination and racism in the Civil Service to become the most inclusive employer in the UK**

Many, if not all of us have heard of the terrible and shocking death of George Floyd in the United States. To witness such brutality and injustice, has scarred and shaken many of us to the core. We send our heartfelt prayers and condolences to the family and friends of George Floyd. We stand in solidarity with George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Belly Mujinga, and all of our Black brothers and sisters whose lives have been continually and senselessly lost. We stand in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement, because Black Lives **do** Matter.

We know that this is a sensitive and challenging time for many, and that just paying lip service isn't enough. If we don't put our words into actions, we don't actually mean what we say. So, we must make sure we're doing our part to support the Black community, Muslim and non-Muslim alike.

What we are hearing from our black members, colleagues, friends and family as well as leaders and activists in the black community, is that we haven't done enough. This is supported by a wealth of evidence, looking at various issues across the spectrum of society. Recent examples include Covid-19 health inequalities report published by Public Health England and deaths of BAME frontline staff.

Muslims and other faith groups are not exempt from bias and discrimination. As a group of communities, we need to do more to support our black brothers and sisters and the fight against racial injustice, within our homes, workplaces and community groups. We must acknowledge where we have failed to do this in the past and ensure that we commit to do better in the future. Muslim communities have seen a rise in Islamophobia and religiously motivated attacks. We know that we can be victims of such hate crimes, structural and institutional discrimination, on the basis of



both our religion and our race. For Black Muslims, this is particularly true as they are, unjustly targeted for their intersectional background.

So, we stand firmly behind all of our black members, colleagues, managers, and leaders to continue to push and strive for equity, dignity and respect. We encourage our members to offer their knowledge, experience and skills to improve our workplaces and truly make the Civil Service the most inclusive employer. **As Co-chairs, we are ready to invest our time away from our day jobs to challenge, share, shape and support the Civil Service vision we believe in.**

We are striving for diversity and inclusion. Although there is much more to do, we are moving in the right direction. However, this progress has sadly not been enough to render #BlackLivesMatter redundant.

In order to make real change, we need more black (Asian and Arab) people in visible senior leadership roles. We remind ourselves of the saying of Prophet Muhammed (peace and blessings be upon him) who in his final sermon at Mount Arafat in 632 AD said:

“An Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab, nor a non-Arab has any superiority over an Arab ... a white person has no superiority over a black, nor does a black have any superiority over white except by piety and good action.”

We pray that we can uphold his teachings of justice and embracing diversity. For all of our black members, colleagues, managers, and leaders, we encourage you to reach out to us and let us know how best we can be of support and assistance to you. We have also attached a helpful infographic and useful links for those wondering how best they can support the Black community and the #BlackLivesMatter movement. This is a time where unity is desperately needed so we would encourage our non-Black members and colleagues to reach out to Black colleagues and friends during this time and be ready to have open and frank conversations about racial injustice and institutionalised racism.

This is our call to action. As Muslims we must remember the Hadith:

“The servant will not achieve the truth of his faith until he loves for people what he loves for himself.” [Musnad Ahmed]

**We fully endorse the range of support and actions set out of the Civil Service Race Forum from working with senior leaders, disseminating information, organising events and training and being a good ally, listed at Annex A.**

**We have asked for a discussion at the next Diversity & Inclusion Action Group on Friday 12 June to have an agreed set of actions that should be consistently**

adopted and measured so we know where we are making progress and where there are is still room for improvement.

We ask that in this time where unity, empathy and understanding is desperately needed our non-black members and colleagues reach out to black colleagues and friends during this time and be ready to have open and frank conversations about racial injustice and institutionalised racism.

We want to hear from you. You don't have to be black and/or Muslim. This isn't about the Civil Service Muslim Network. This is about working to achieve respect, dignity and equality for all colleagues and all people starting with #BlackLivesMatter. Contact us confidentially, your local Muslim, BAME or other staff support network, and consider use of some excellent internal and confidential helplines that are there to support us.

Only time will tell if all of us in positions of leadership and influence can say we are actually striving in the right direction and make #BlackLivesMatter redundant.

Kind regards,

**Nuzhat Ali**

**Ahmed Azam**




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## Annex A

### Civil Service Race Forum actions and resources

#### Working with Senior Leaders

1. Work with your Permanent Secretaries and Race Champions to draft an official statement regarding current events to be posted on your departmental intranet if this hasn't already been done.
2. Encourage SCS across directorates to recognise this is an issue and signpost people to join your networks to combat race inequality.
3. See if you can secure a slot at your department's all-SCS session to enable BAME and particularly Black staff to share their experiences and perspectives on these issues.
4. Use the interest and momentum generated to lobby for key asks that would transform an aspect of BAME life in your department: from asking for a change in recruitment policy to securing targets for Black-specific representation or guaranteed BAME places on local talent schemes – where is the area that your asks can have the most impact?

#### Disseminating Information

5. Disseminate resources to educate and empower your networks – from resources enabling a critical framework to discuss race to articles contextualising racism in the UK context and sharing top tips on how to be a good ally.
6. Consider how to promote wellbeing of staff in your network, from signposting resources to connecting members with Mental Health First Aiders and the Wellbeing/Mental Health Networks in your department.
7. Encourage participation in events. [Pearn Kandola](#) are running a number of helpful webinars, including one on racism at work in light of Covid-19 to becoming an active bystander, combating micro-incivilities and wellbeing.

#### Organising Events and Training

8. Organise safe spaces where your Black colleagues can come together to virtually hold space and provide peer support (with option to feed in anonymously through platforms like slido).
9. Run open events for your wider departments to be engaging in these discussions: creating a space for colleagues to reflect on these events and share tips on wellbeing.
10. Organise training on how to be a good ally to the Black community during this time, and perhaps develop a toolkit which can be deployed across your department.
11. Roll out 'Let's Talk About Race' training at a grassroots level across teams and directorates



### How to be a good ally

For White colleagues and those from minority ethnic backgrounds who are not Black, many will be wondering what they can do to help and support our Black colleagues. **There are several things we can do to become supportive allies:**

- 1) **Read and educate yourself** – educating yourself about the challenges faced by Black colleagues and friends, requires active listening, engagement and curiosity. There are plenty of resources being circulated on Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram at the moment, and we found the following very helpful signposts:
  - [Anti-racism resources](#) and [here](#)
  - [How to support Black lives in the UK](#)
- 2) **Amplify** – amplifying the voices of Black colleagues, by providing platforms to demonstrate support and advocate change. You may never share their experiences, but you can use your relative privilege as someone who does not experience racism or who may experience racism differently to make sure Black voices are heard.
- 3) **Challenge** – call out inequality, mistreatment and ignorance wherever and whenever we see it and be introspective – is there more you can do personally to challenge your unconscious bias?
- 4) **Check in on people** - right now colleagues need support more than ever, particularly whilst we are all working from home. Even if they seem okay during video calls, [they may be experiencing a range of emotions behind the scenes](#). Use your regular team meetings, coffee breaks organised by several networks as a safe place to see how people are really feeling. And then make sure we continue this going forward, so it remains ingrained in our culture.
- 5) **Donate and Support Black Educators** – there are numerous grassroots organisations which are active in fighting against racism or supporting protesters, and donating is a tangible way to make an impact. Subscribing and donating to Black educators helps to recognise and sustain the hard work that goes into developing their anti-racism resources. Making a conscious effort to support Black businesses will also make a big impact, given the disproportionate economic impact of Covid-19 on the BAME business community.