

Agenda:

1. Introductory remarks by the chair Mohammed Khaled Noor
2. Keynote speech – Safeguarding and Well-being of Our Children – Dr Muhammad Abdul Bari, MBE FRSA
3. Extremism and its Possible Causes – Dalwardin Babu (OBE)
4. Safeguarding Our Youth from Radicalisation: A Head Teacher’s Perspective – Brenda Landers, Head Teacher, Swanlea School
5. A brief speech - Lord Nazir Ahmed
6. Questions and Answers Session
7. Concluding remarks

DISCUSSION AND SPEAKER
Introductory Remarks – Mohammed Khaled Noor
<p>The chair of the seminar and MPF Mohammed Khaled Noor welcomed the distinguish guests speakers and audience. He gave his introductory remarks highlighting the aim of objectives of the seminar. He highlighted the importance of identifying the possible causes behind young people’s radicalisation and exploring possible effective ways of how to tackle them. Mr Noor stressed that children’s wellbeing and their best interest is non-negotiable and that it is a religious duty upon Muslims to be concerned about children’s welfare and best interest. He expressed his view on how Iraq war, conflict in Syria and ISIS issue have brought Muslim community as a whole and young people in particular on the spotlight of debate about terrorism and radicalisation.</p> <p>Mr Noor also gave a brief introduction of MPF and an overview of its aims and objectives that it is a non-profit organisation, which provides a common platform for professionals and seek to work against islamophobic and racist attitudes, religious extremism, racial discrimination, crime and disorder, domestic violence and violation of human rights.</p>
Keynote speech – Safeguarding and Well-being of Our Children – Dr Muhammad Abdul Bari, MBE FRSA
<p>Dr Bari began his keynote speech with brief background of himself. He said that he has been running parenting courses for years and has written a few books on parenting. He therefore has some personal experience of young people. He talked about the three girls who went missing and travelled to Syria recently, which touched him. He said he understands how their parents can feel. He said loosing children in the hand of ISIS-type cult groups is painful and tragic for parents. He also talked about government strategy such as Prevent and the effectiveness and impact of this.</p> <p>Dr Bari then moved on to talk about safeguarding of children. He said safeguarding of children is about protecting them from maltreatment, ensuring they grow up with love, care and safety, preventing impairment of their health and development and preparing them to have the best in their life. He said the responsibility of safeguarding children fall with parents and family, teachers and schools, police, health professionals, social services and other relevant agencies, community and youth services, religious institutions and local and central governments.</p>

Dr Bari explained the four areas of child protection i.e. physical, psychological, sexual and neglect. He also talked about teen age issues and challenges and described teen age children often have energy, adventure and creativity. They can present with idealism, passion, impatience, insolence, rudeness, rebellion, individualism and independence as well as lifestyle, fashion and trend. However, children are also often immature, impressionable and vulnerable. They are weak in knowledge, including in religious understanding and inexperience with the reality of life.

As strategies for motivating children, Dr Bari made some valuable suggestions, which include parents to act as role models and give their children undiluted love. Children also need respect and personal space and they need to be able to build self-esteem and confidence. Healthy competition, decent recreation, higher expectation and making things exciting and challenging always help to motivate children.

Dr Bari emphasised that identity, culture and customs are important in a child's life and that age-appropriate positive, but assertive, discipline techniques are also important. He suggested the following for a loving, lively and positive home environment:

- Children should know boundaries and family rules
- Plan to eat together, have fun and talk on important issues
- Regular family sessions, but with positive and loving atmosphere
- Set some basic rules with everyone's contributions
- Agree on rewards and sanctions, follow with consistency
- Create a learning and enjoyable environment at home
- Give ample freedom and allow children to ask difficult questions
- Turn any negative to positive with wisdom

Dr Bari also stressed for a home-school partnership. He concluded his speech by quoting a Hadith and stating that for Muslims their child is a trust (amanah) and test.

Extremism and its Possible Causes – Dalwardin Babu (OBE)

Mr Dalwardin Babu also known as Dal Babu is the most high ranking retired Muslim police officer (former chief superintendent of metropolitan police), who is now involved in an initiative called "Extremism; Community Safety and Security Ltd".

Mr Babu began his presentation by referring to the quote "nothing about us without us is for us". He said that he has now more freedom to speak. He referred to the earlier presentation by Dr Bari and said he wanted to start by building on what Dr Bari said. Mr Babu quoted the definition of extremism from Oxford Dictionary "the holding of extreme political or religious views; fanaticism". He touched on the government four strategies: PREPARE, PROTECT, PURSUE and PREVENT, but highlighted that the most controversial government policy is PREVENT.

Mr Babu argued that Pursue can be measured in respect of number of arrests made and convictions obtained; he however questioned "how do you measure Prevent"? He

highlighted the concerns over Department of Communities and Local Government and Select Committee quoting the committee chairwoman Dr Phyllis Starkey, who said: "We agree that a targeted strategy must address the contemporary al-Qaeda-inspired terrorist threat, but we do not believe a government department charged with promoting cohesive communities should take a leading role in this counter-terrorism initiative."

Mr Babu added that Shami Chakravarty of Liberty expressed concern over extent of surveillance without adequate safeguards. Furthermore Communities Secretary John Denham said Prevent had suffered from a "lack of clarity" and he began shifting the emphasis of the entire strategy on extremism, saying that he wanted to see more, targeting of the far-right. Mr Babu also quoted Chris Huhne, who said: "The Prevent programme alienates and marginalises Muslim communities, and exacerbates racist bias and ignorant views.

Mr Babu also questioned about the amount of money that has been spent under Prevent so far. He reported that £53 million spent between 2007 and 2010. 94 local authorities were given £24 million in 2010 and 2011. Altogether more than 1000 projects receive Prevent funding though some Muslim groups say they will decline to take Prevent funding.

Mr Babu talked about the impact of foreign policy such as Iraq invasion and the rise of extremism including far right and EDL as well as the rise of Muslim prison population and mental health issues. He urged that there is a need to revisit Prevent and review strategy for all extremism including far right and EDL.

As strategies of safeguarding children Mr Babu suggested that social media such Twitter and Facebook be used with control and accountability and limited WiFi access for children with increase parental controls.

Mr Babu concluded his presentation by referring to the quote that he began with "Nothing about us without us is for us.

A Brief Speech - Lord Nazir Ahmed

Lord Ahmed began his speech with a reference to the one of MPF's recent seminar on census report 2011 and general election which was held in House of Lords encouraging Muslims to register for vote and participate in general election. On the issue of Muslim radicalisation, he said ISIS is a terrorist organisation, they have nothing to do with Islamic. Lord Ahmed said no one knows the exact number of ISIS members, but he reckons they are likely to be a few hundreds. He talked about issues that Muslims are facing and pointed to the fact that Muslim prison population is growing. He said he has been talking about Muslim youth and drugs problems etc. Lord Ahmed stressed on the importance of engaging with our children - Muslims and non-Muslims. He said we need to spend time with our children. He touched on children/young people's vulnerability through online and said child grooming has been going on for years. He said this is not the problem only for the Muslims, but this is a problem for society as a whole. He questioned the effectiveness of government's "prevent" programme.

Lord Ahmed said, like Jewish community, what they have been through in the past, Muslims community is being blamed for everything. He quoted some media coverage for example “Muslim sex grooming” and said associating a religious groups with some of the heinous crime committed needs to be challenged.

Safeguarding Our Youth from Radicalisation: A Head Teacher’s Perspective
Brenda Landers, Head Teacher, Swanlea School, Whitechapel

Ms Brenda Landers has been a maths and economics teacher for almost 24 years. She has taught in Birmingham and across East London for several years. She has been teaching at Swanlea School, Whitechapel for 10 years and has been the head teacher for last four years. Swanlea is a highly successful co-educational comprehensive school, which has achieved Ofsted “outstanding” judgment for the past two years.

Ms Landers highlighted in her speech that we live in challenging times, with the young men and young women in our communities exposed to a myriad of messages and narratives that can lead them down dangerous roads. No one organisation or group is able to manage this situation in isolation; we need to work together, building genuinely collaborative partnerships. She said that schools are part of the solution, but they cannot do it by themselves. Schools only have young people for 30 hours per week and 190 days per year. Parents/carers are also key in safeguarding our young people. She said wider Muslim communities also have a key role to play; offering our young people alternative pathways; channelling their desire to make the world a better place in positive directions.

Ms Landers said we have to work together and ask ourselves some tough questions, this issue is not straightforward; a multi-layered approach/response is required from all of us. Our young people have the right to expect this from us; they deserve nothing less.

Q&A including suggestions

There was a questions and answers session at the end of the seminar where audience asked a few questions and panel of speakers answered.

Concluding Remarks

The seminar was closed by MPF chairperson Mr Mohammed Khaled Noor’s concluding remarks.