

'Race-Baiting' is Yet another Ugly Tool of Opportunistic Secular Politics

News:

In recent weeks, the British press have highlighted the use of 'race-baiting' by various ministers in the UK government to shore up support from right-wing and xenophobic elements of the electorate. It follows a series of incendiary statements from the British Home Secretary, Suella Braverman who singled out British Pakistani men as having a higher propensity to be part of grooming gangs involved in the sexual abuse of young vulnerable white girls in the country, characterising such heinous behaviour as being somehow linked to their ethnicity or culture. She homed in on a string of high-profile cases involving men of Pakistani origin rather than acknowledging that the sexual abuse of children is a widespread problem in the country, involving all sectors and ethnicities. She said that the perpetrators of sexual crimes involving grooming gangs are *"groups of men, almost all British Pakistani"*. This is despite the fact that a 2020 report from her own Home Office stated that it found it extremely difficult to find a causal link between ethnicity, race and the sexual exploitation of children, and concluded that most child-grooming gang members were white men under the age of 30. This is hardly surprising since the majority of the population are white. Braverman also stated in a Sky News interview that British Pakistani men, *"see women in a demeaned and illegitimate way and who pursue an outdated and frankly heinous approach in terms of the way they behave"*. The Home Secretary has also made a number of derogatory comments against immigrants, labelling migrants and asylum seekers crossing in small boats into the country as an 'invasion' and linking migration to heightened levels of criminality, drug-dealing, prostitution and exploitation. Robert Jenrick, the Minister for Immigration, also stated, *"excessive, uncontrolled migration threatens to cannibalize the compassion that marks British society"* and that those who cross into the country are comprised of *"different lifestyles and values to those in the UK...undermining the cultural cohesiveness that binds diverse communities together."*

Comment:

Race-baiting is the use of provocative statements or lies about race or the incitement of racial hatred or anger towards certain ethnic groups, often to gain a political advantage. This tool has become part and parcel of secular politics and an electioneering tactic in secular states across the world. It is not surprising that Braverman's and Jenrick's statements came against the backdrop of local elections this month and looming general elections next year in the country. Anti-immigration and anti-Muslim rhetoric as well as identity politics targeting certain ethnic groups has long been the background noise of French presidential elections with candidates competing against one another to demonstrate to their electorate who has the greater xenophobic credentials. Politicians of all shades in France – left, right and centrist – have argued that increased numbers of foreign nationals in the country has degraded traditional French values. French President Emmanuel Macron stated during last year's election during a rally to his supporters, *"When we are afraid of migratory phenomena, I think that we must also defend our DNA."* In US politics, strategies designed to make white people suspicious and fearful of African Americans and immigrants has long been employed to win elections. Donald Trump used anti-immigrant and xenophobic rhetoric to appeal to a certain base in the country in both the 2016 and 2020 presidential elections.

All this once again demonstrates the inherent dangers and divisiveness of the capitalist secular system in which politicians have no qualms about peddling lies, racism and hatred

towards ethnic groups in order to win elections. It is a system that allows politicians to play communities against one another, stir racial hatred and emboldens far-right extremists for political gain regardless of the disastrous consequences on the lives of individuals and societies. Last year, anti-Muslim crimes increased by 28% in the UK. This was attributed in large part by the growth of right wing hate groups that exploited misconceptions about Muslims, including those peddled by politicians. The recent attacks on the migrant centre in Dover and refugees living in a hotel in Knowsley in the UK were also linked to the inflammatory anti-immigrant language employed by the British Home Secretary. In 2019, the far-right terrorist, Brenton Tarrant, who murdered 51 Muslims at 2 mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, wrote “for Rotherham” on his ammunition before opening fire. Rotherham is a town in the UK which right-wing politicians often exploit as an example to peddle their lie of the disproportionate involvement of Pakistani men in grooming gangs due to a high-profile case in which a number of Pakistani men were found guilty of abusing young white girls.

How can such a system that entertains this dog-whistle, red meat, Machiavelli style of politics where the ends justify the means and where nothing is beyond the pale as long as it bags a few cheap votes, be viewed as the best way to govern a state? How can such a system that plays to the gallery of racist and xenophobic views and that stokes prejudice and ethnic tensions rather seek to remove them, ever create cohesive, safe societies? How can such a system that allows politicians to try and boost their popularity by using minorities as punch bags to win elections, ever be viewed as progressive and civilized? And how can such a system that breeds division between people and polarises societies ever be seen as a healthy political model?

As Muslims, surely it is time to reject this secular man-made system from our lands that has similarly sown division between Muslims and allowed politicians to fan the flame of racism in our societies for political advantage! Surely, it is time to return to the System of Allah (swt), the Khilafah (Caliphate) based upon the method of the Prophethood, that has a time-tested approach to uprooting racism from people and melting those from different ethnicities and nationalities into one state where all feel equally respected and protected through the just laws of Islam. Surely, it is time to re-establish this truly progressive and civilized system under which politics is about genuinely taking care of the needs of the people rather than generating a mud-slinging match between self-serving, power-hungry politicians who are more than ready to light racial fires within their societies for their own political gain!

﴿ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَاكَ عَلَىٰ شَرِيعَةٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْرِ فَاتَّبِعْهَا وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَاءَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ﴾

“We have made for you a Shariah so follow it, and do not follow the low desires of the ignorant people.” [Al-Jathiya: 18]

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