



## **YES, A MATURE DEBATE NEEDS TO BE HAD**

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The Islamic faith promotes a society where people rub shoulders and exchange pleasantries in their day to day lives. Separateness is simply not the Islamic way.

Voices from all sections of society, and including from Muslim society, seem to be asking the question "What next?" regarding Muslims, with increasing desperation. In such a tense climate, why did Jack Straw choose the methods he did to make his views heard? Sensational headlines and making politics of an essentially religious matter in this way will prove counter productive, and a gift to those who have it 'in' for Muslims.

Moreover Jack Straw did not do his homework on the social and political history of the veil: whenever European politicians have singled out the feminine veil, the extent of veiling has risen.

British Muslims should consider more carefully the broader impact of positions chosen and adopted for reasons of faith. This must be met by greater care from politicians and some sections of the media, who should consider more carefully the signals their chosen actions send out.

A mature debate needs to be had. But debates on Muslim practice must be led by experts on the Islamic faith, not spin.

We believe such debates should not be the reserve of the Muslim community and should actually be about integration, citizenship and being British today. Can Muslims practice their religion in their place of birth without hindrance? A very small section of British citizens hold the personal belief it is their divine duty to veil themselves fully. Will we allow them that right as a society?

Dr Zahoor Qurashi

7th October 2006