

## **FFL and Faiths United Press Release**

### **Faith Activists express concern about effect of Covid-19 on domestic abuse and call for action**

The heads and leading figures from faith-based domestic abuse charities, spanning different faith communities, have come together to warn about the problem of domestic abuse and support the #FaithsAgainstDomesticAbuse campaign.

The joint statement signed by activists from Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Hindu and Sikh communities as well as groups offering universal support, expresses concern that charities may face even higher demand once the restrictions of lockdown are eased. It also called on government to provide more sustainable funding for domestic abuse services, particularly those supporting survivors from BAME, migrant and faith backgrounds.

The statement was released as Faiths Forum for London, in partnership with Faiths United and the Women's Interfaith Network, have launched the #FaithsAgainstDomesticAbuse campaign to highlight the problem of domestic abuse in faith communities.

The campaign has published guidance for domestic abuse with support helplines aimed at victims from faith communities. [Click here to access the full guide](#). Alongside this, a [video](#) has also been released with majority female faith and community leaders calling on their respective faith communities to condemn domestic abuse.

The main points made by leading faith-based activists in the joint statement (Full Statement below) are as follows:

- Evidence has shown that the lockdown has exacerbated the situation for many women. Women with abusive partners report feeling “trapped” at home.
- Many women in faith and BAME communities face the most barriers to accessing domestic abuse support services. They also stay with abusive partners for longer than women in the general population and are less likely to access mainstream support.
- There is concern that charities may face even higher demand once the restrictions of lockdown are eased, as some victims feel trapped at home and are unable to seek support at present.
- Government support is welcome but does not go far enough to ensure specialist BAME support organisations have the resources and capacity they need to support women
- Call upon government to better and more sustainably fund domestic abuse services, particularly those supporting survivors from BAME, migrant and faith backgrounds.

Nicole Jacobs, Domestic Abuse Commissioner has approved the following quote:

"We know that the problem of domestic abuse is widespread, affecting victims of every faith and BAME background. The Covid crisis has brought a whole new set of series and challenges. Different faith-based charities coming together for this campaign is welcome. The Faith & VAWG Coalition's launch conference in March also highlighted the possibilities of supporting survivors and ending abuse when communities and sector specialists come together. #FaithsAgainstDomesticAbuse is a good example of this and of different faiths working together to highlight the problem and support survivors in all communities."

Huda Jawad, SAFE Communities Project Manager and co-founder of Faith & VAWG Coalition, of Standing Together, said:

“We call on faith leaders and representatives to continue to condemn domestic abuse and harmful practices that have no place in religion, and undertake training to spot the signs of abuse and better support survivors in their communities.”

ENDS

**Joint Statement by faith-based organisations and inter-faith organisations addressing the issue of domestic abuse and harmful practices**

“We come together in solidarity, empathy and support for all those who are being subjected to abuse during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The National Domestic Abuse helpline has reported a dramatic increase in calls, at times by as much as 50%. We are concerned that our charities and frontline services may face even higher demand once the restrictions of lockdown are eased, as some victims feel trapped at home and are unable to seek support at present.

We cannot ignore that there are perpetrators within all our faith communities. At our best, our faith communities nurture healthy relationships and strengthen society. The home exists alongside our churches, mosques, synagogues, gurdwaras and temples, to enable growth within both faith and our local communities.

Sadly, the ideal that our faiths provide does not always materialise. There is evidence that women in faith communities stay with abusive partners for longer than women in the general population and are less likely to access mainstream support.

In all our communities, we hear reports not only of physical abuse but other forms of abuse which may be financial, psychological and emotional in nature. There are also instances of spiritual abuse, whereby abusers use religion to persuade people to stay with an abusive partner. Children are often the hidden victims of this kind of abuse.

We welcome the government's announcement of extra funding of £76m to support vulnerable people, and parliament is currently debating the Domestic Abuse Bill. However, this does not go far enough to ensure specialist BAME support organisations have the resources and capacity they need to support women and children affected by domestic abuse and harmful practice within all of our faith-based communities.

We therefore call for sustainable government funding of specialist domestic abuse services which cater for those from BAME, migrant and faith backgrounds and in addition the education of statutory agencies and the judicial system to aid them in recognising and understanding cultural barriers and honour based abuse.

We need to unite and redouble our efforts at addressing the scourge of domestic abuse and all other forms of violence against women. Specialist organisations who work to support victims of domestic abuse will continue their essential work to support survivors, deliver services to change mindsets and train religious and community leaders to help their networks.”

Signatures:

- Tara Corry, Women's Interfaith Network
- Polly Harrar, Founder of Sharan
- Sahdaish and Narinder Kooner, Sikh Women's Action Network
- Onjali Rauf, Founder of Making Herstory
- Veronica Simpson, Back in Control Consultancy
- Shahien Taj OBE, Henna Foundation
- Faith & Violence against Women and Girls Coalition
  - **(member organizations are as follows)**
    - **Forward**
    - **Jewish Women's Aid**
    - **Latin American Women's Right Service**
    - **Muslim Youth Helpline**
    - **Respect**
    - **Restored**
    - **Standing Together Against Domestic Violence**
    - **Natalie Collins**
    - **Nikki Dhillon-Keane**
    - **Sara Hyde**