

Labour candidate told she was 'not a proper Muslim' because of Western name

From the [Telegraph](#)

A Labour candidate was told that she was not a proper Muslim because she had a Western first name, she has revealed.



Heather Iqbal and Iqbal Mohamed

You can see why her parents thought a neutral flower name might be a refreshing change

Heavily defeated in Dewsbury and Batley by Iqbal Mohamed, after a campaign she said was characterised by "intimidation". Ms Iqbal said Mr Mohamed's supporters chased her down the street and shouted that she was a "child murderer" and a "genocide agent", while a loudspeaker van blared out the message that Labour was a Zionist party.

In an interview with The Telegraph, Ms Iqbal revealed she had to stop taking her baby son out with her when she knocked on doors because of the heated nature of the campaign.

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She said Muslim Labour members in Dewsbury were under huge pressure to quit the party because of its stance on Gaza, with their children bullied at school for having a parent in Labour.

Her testimony provides a worrying insight into the kind of sectarian politics apparently on the rise in parts of the UK in the wake of Hamas's October 7 attack on Israel.

The news came as Labour gathered for its annual conference. On Sunday, delegates had to pass a large and noisy group of pro-Palestinian activists to enter the venue.

Ms Iqbal said: "Whether I was Muslim or not was constantly questioned, with constant criticism of my first name, including in open community meetings held by the independent MP. Activists and some of my family members were chased down the street. In polling week, I had a van that would follow me and different activists. . . ."

Ms Iqbal said Mr Mohamed – who sits in [a new independent alliance in the Commons with Jeremy Corbyn](#), the hard-Left former Labour leader – never called on his activists to tone down their behaviour.

Dewsbury, a West Yorkshire textile town with a proud history of pioneering radicalism, has had a Labour MP for most of the past century. At the last boundary review it was joined together with Batley, another Labour stronghold.

But in [the Batley and Spen by-election in 2021](#) George Galloway almost won the seat from [Kim Leadbeater of Labour](#) by focusing on Muslim feelings on the Middle East, a sign of problems ahead.

Since the 1960s, Dewsbury has had a large Muslim community concentrated in the districts of Savile Town, Thornhill Lees and Ravensthorpe. Batley has a similarly large Muslim population.

Ms Iqbal said there were a number of Labour members who felt “silenced. . . They felt they needed to leave the party in a public way because their children were getting bullied at school, or they were getting abused when they would go to the mosque,” she said. “And I think that’s a really sad state of affairs. Since the election I have seen a number of social media posts that talked about how any Labour supporter should be marginalised, should be ostracised; that they were traitors, hypocrites. They shouldn’t be given positions in charities or mosques. I would like to see Iqbal Mohamed publicly denounce those kinds of social media posts and actively push against them, and make people feel like there could be a diversity of political views and opposition as in any healthy democracy.”

Jackie Ramsay, Ms Iqbal’s election agent said she reported independent supporters to the police on three occasions. On one occasion, while a small group was canvassing in a Muslim area of Batley, an independent supporter ran up and “very aggressively shouted at us that we weren’t welcome in that area. He collected leaflets from some of the doors that we had delivered to. He said it was an independent area; if we didn’t get out he would be calling people so that they would remove us.”

Elsewhere in Batley, she said, Ms Iqbal was campaigning with members of her family and some other Muslim activists who had stuck with Labour. “There was a man who was saying to them that they’re not good Muslims,” said Ms Ramsay. “If they’re Muslims they need to re-look at their faith because of the genocide.” Remember what they did to the teacher at Batley Grammar school.

Ms Ramsay stood as a councillor in May’s local election but lost out to an independent in Dewsbury South, which includes largely Muslim Savile Town as well as largely white Thornhill. A few months before, she said, councillors had been called in to be interviewed by the leaders of local mosques

about their views on the conflict in the Middle East. "The expectation really was that we would resign from the Labour Party and then they could give us support as councillors," said Ms Ramsay. "Clearly, I didn't resign... Labour Party members started to leave. There was intimidation going on. People were expected if they were from the Muslim faith to leave the 'genocidal party' or the 'party that supports the killing of babies'."

"Polling day was very difficult for us in the local elections. A lot of people with big independent rosettes were outside polling stations. I witnessed it at Thornhill Lees and Savile Town where people were being told what box to vote for. You had to run a bit of a gauntlet [to get in]."

And one of my favooourite comments says "Labour was quite happy to accommodate militant Islam while it was delivering sacks full of postal votes."

Interesting that, so far as I have read, Leanne Mohammed the pro Gaza independent candidate who stood against Wes Streeting in Ilford has never been so challenged.