

Sharia inquiry launched by Home Affairs Committee

Posted: Wed, 29th Jun 2016

The Home Affairs Committee has announced the launch of its own inquiry into Sharia councils in the UK, following the start of a Government review back in May.

The Committee has said that it will "examine how Sharia councils operate in practice, their work resolving family and divorce disputes and their relationship with the British legal system."

It is inviting written evidence on the "extent to which Sharia councils might discriminate against women" and why the councils are used.

In their inquiry the Committee will [seek evidence](#) on the "basic tenets of Sharia law with reference to family, divorce, domestic violence and children and how those compare to the same in British law."

Stephen Evans, campaigns director of the National Secular Society welcomed the Home Affairs Committee's inquiry: "It is good to see that the operation of sharia councils in the UK is being subjected to scrutiny from both Parliament and the Government.

"While many do sadly choose themselves to use Sharia councils, a massive effort must be made to ensure that everyone living in Britain can access their civil and legal rights under UK law. Nothing should be permitted to obstruct this."

When the [Home Office announced their review](#) of Sharia law in the UK they claimed that discrimination against women was "contrary" to Islam. The National Secular Society criticised the Home Office for involving itself in theological debates and for asserting what 'true' Islam was.

The Home Affairs Committee's inquiry will look at the "relationship between Sharia councils and the British legal system" and the "extent to which Sharia law is compatible with the principles of British law."

It will consider what role the Government could have "in overseeing or monitoring Sharia councils" and how "other, non-majority Muslim, countries have responded to Sharia councils operating within their jurisdictions."

The Chair of the Home Affairs Select Committee, Keith Vaz MP, said: "The Committee has launched an inquiry into Sharia courts following much uncertainty regarding their role within communities in the UK.

"We will be hearing evidence from both observers and practitioners of these courts, and are currently accepting written evidence on a wide-range of issues, including the compatibility of Sharia courts with British law."

In November 2015 Vaz was [recorded saying](#) he had "no objection" to the reintroduction of a blasphemy law in the UK, but that it "should apply to all religions." In [contradictory remarks](#) he said "no" when asked if there should be blasphemy laws but then said "If somebody brings it forward in

parliament I'll vote for it."

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