

Public Statement on the Appointment of Lord Carlile of Berriew as Independent Reviewer of Prevent

We are deeply troubled by the appointment of Lord Carlile as Independent Reviewer of Prevent. Not only has the government failed to follow its own Governance Code on Public Appointments, but Lord Carlile's close ties with and publicly declared support for the Prevent strategy undermine the integrity and credibility of this review from the outset.

In January 2019, following Parliament's insistence on an independent review of Prevent, the government announced that such a review would occur. Proponents of the review have consistently called for it to be meaningfully independent and conducted by someone with no current or prior experience as a government-appointed reviewer.

In June, the government assured Parliament that the appointments process would follow the Cabinet Office Governance Code on Public Appointments.ⁱ Yet the government has failed to follow that Code, including by failing to publicly advertise the position and publish information about the selection criteria.

Lord Carlile cannot be considered impartial or independent. He has been a member of the Home Office's Prevent Oversight Boardⁱⁱ charged with "driving delivery"ⁱⁱⁱ of Prevent, and has declared his "considered and strong support" for the Prevent strategy.^{iv} In May this year, he told a public audience that "the appointment of a Prevent reviewer [is] completely unnecessary, based on fictitious or complete lack of evidence".^v Indeed, it seems that Lord Carlile himself doubts his ability to be impartial about Prevent, telling the House of Lords in 2018: "I admit I played a part in [Prevent], so I may be somewhat biased towards it [...] and I accept the accusation of apparent bias as a possibility. However, I believe that Prevent has demonstrated that it has been successful".^{vi}

There seems to be little purpose in an "independent review" whose outcome is pre-ordained by Lord Carlile's self-declared partiality. His appointment to this vitally important position shatters the credibility of the review from the outset. The review should be comprehensive and wide-ranging in scope and not one that starts with the premise that Prevent should be continued and/or expanded.

We call upon the government to urgently rethink this appointment and ensure that the review is led by a genuinely independent person who inspires confidence in affected communities, with a willingness to go where the evidence may lead.

Liberty

Index on Censorship

Defend Digital Me

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CAGE

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The Runnymede Trust

JUST Yorkshire

Muslim Council of Britain

Open Society Justice Initiative

ⁱ Response to Lord Anderson of Ipswich (HL16344), 27 June 2019, available at

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-06-13/HL16344/>.

ⁱⁱ House of Lords, 17 December 2018, Hansard column 1637, <https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2018-12-17/debates/A45EE86B-0D09-472D-BF99-D64DDF9D5D20/Counter-TerrorismAndBorderSecurityBill> (“I happen to be a member of the Prevent oversight board”); Joint Committee on Human Rights, Oral evidence: Legislative Scrutiny: Counter-extremism Bill, HC 647

9 March 2016, available at

<http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/human-rights-committee/countering-extremism/oral/30366.html>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Response to Lord Carlisle of Berriew (HL 4388), 18 January 2017, available at

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2017-01-09/HL4388/>.

^{iv} Prevent Strategy, HMSO June 2011, CM8092, page 4.

^v Remarks at the Open Government Partnership Global Summit, Ottawa, 31 May 2019, plenary session. Available on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xp9epxiKVy0> at 2hrs 51mins 45secs.

^{vi} House of Lords, 17 December 2018, Hansard column 1625, available at

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2018-12-17/debates/A45EE86B-0D09-472D-BF99-D64DDF9D5D20/Counter-TerrorismAndBorderSecurityBill>