



gender action for peace and security

GAPS Secretariat statement on racist and Islamophobic riots in the UK

The recent racist, anti-migrant and Islamophobic riots in multiple cities across the UK, fuelled by far-right and fascist movements, are deeply distressing and should raise serious concerns for the UK Government. GAPS has [previously warned](#) of the inevitable consequences of ongoing UK Government rhetoric and policies targeting and dehumanising asylum-seekers, refugees and migrants. Along with harmful media narratives about racialised groups, this has emboldened the violence, harassment and scapegoating that Muslims, migrants, and people of colour in the UK have faced over the last few weeks. *As an immediate first step, we urge everyone to check in on their racialised colleagues and offer support and solidarity. People who are not directly affected by racism should also consider practical actions they can undertake to help protect racialised communities from these far-right riots.*

These riots demonstrate an environment of decreasing security in the UK and increasing instability with the targeted violence of minoritised groups of all kinds. This is underpinned by structural racism, Islamophobia and anti-migrant policies and discourse, with a gendered impact on refugee and migrant women and girls and gendered minorities. *The UK must take this seriously under its commitments to the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and take immediate action to condemn and stop the riots. The root causes of white supremacy and systemic racism must also be recognised and addressed in any state response.*

These riots are an exacerbation of ongoing white supremacy, xenophobia and far-right sentiments that has been increasing across Europe over recent years. The normalisation of racism and Islamophobia among establishment media and politics has over many years nurtured an atmosphere of hate. This does not happen in isolation and proves again how peacebuilding within the UK is imperative and is connected to conflict and injustice globally.

The UK's proposed response to these riots, such as increased deployment of armed police, must be considered carefully in regards to the long-term impact it will have on racialised groups. Strengthening the mechanisms and powers of the Home Office and the criminal justice system towards a more authoritarian approach, will ultimately empower systems that support racist and anti-migrant methods of surveillance, policing and deportation. *Community groups and civil society organisations have always led the work on addressing tensions and bringing communities together, and these are the groups that must be listened to, supported and resourced. They hold the solutions and expertise, and must be consulted by the UK in its response.*

We also must not lose sight of the murder of the three young girls in a targeted attack on women and girls in Southport that occurred and has been used as an excuse for far-right provocateurs to instigate further violence and fear. The devastating killings are part of a broader pattern of gender-based violence and femicide that is endemic in the UK and is in fact perpetuated by the recent rioters.

As a network committed to anti-racism, it is crucial that we not only speak out against these acts but also take actionable steps to support those affected. We must recognise the profound impact these events have on the mental health and well-being of affected communities. GAPS is a team made up of racialised people and we are trying our best to navigate our own position, feelings and safety amidst all of this. We also view this through the lens of global peace and security, and recognise the patterns of scapegoating and discrimination that leads to violence like this. *It is our shared responsibility to speak out against hate and discrimination, provide resources and support, and create safe spaces for dialogue and expressing solidarity.*

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