

**THE DARK PSYCHOLOGY OF DEHUMANISATION AND ISLAMOPHOBIA**  
**IKHLAQ KASHKARI, ANJUM RAHMAN**

**20 MARCH 4 pm**

>>RINGA HĀPAI: E ngā mana, e ngā reo, e ngā karangatanga maha, tēnā koutou katoa. Te mana whenua o tēnei wahi, te iwi o Rangitane tēnā koutou, otira e ngā iwi whānui, tēnā koutou katoa. Kia ora koutou katoa, assalamu alaikum (Bengali). I am Mohan Dutta with CARE Massey University and it is my humble honour to welcome you to this session, "The dark psychology of dehumanisation and Islamophobia". I whakapapa to Bengal, one of the earliest places of colonisation by the British East India Company and of anti-colonial, anti-racist struggles against it.

Before we begin the session I invite you to consider the house rules for dialogue. Let's commit to creating an invitational space, one that respects each other and seeks to build a mutual commitment to solidarity in anti-racist struggles. I invite you to ask questions using the Q&A functions on Zoom.

Three years since the Islamophobia violence of the Christchurch terrorist attacks, as we grapple in Aotearoa with the hate manifest in that acts, as we struggle to find the most meaningful ways to challenge the infrastructures of Islamophobia fueled by white supremacists, (inaudible) supremacists and right wing Zionist hate groups globally and here in Aotearoa, often working alongside each other, and as we negotiate the Islamophobia that has been seeded into the structures of the security, Police, military state in the backdrop of the global war on terror, it is vital to explore the underlying psychological processes of dehumanisation that shape and mobilise Islamophobia.

In this panel we will explore dehumanisation, what it is and how it forms the infrastructure of Islamophobia, the violent effects of dehumanisation and Islamophobia, the limits of current political leadership and political formations in addressing dehumanisation and Islamophobia, and finally the potential solutions that are going to be urgently needed to resist Islamophobia.

We have with us today two amazing activists working day and night, working by placing their bodies on the line, often facing these forces of hate, to challenge the structures of disinformation that are circulated by those political and economic forces that profit from Islamophobia,

Sister Anjum Rahman was a founding member of the New Zealand Islamic Women's Council, a spokesperson for the Muslim community following the Christchurch

mosque shootings, and is the founder of the Inclusive Aotearoa collective to combat discrimination. We also have with us brother Ikhlāq Kashkari, who is the President of the New Zealand Muslim Association. Welcome Anjum and Ikhlāq.

We will begin with the first question which is what is dehumanisation and how it is related to Islamophobia. And I invite you, Anjum, to address us first and then we will come to you, Ikhlāq.

>>MS RAHMAN: (Arabic), tēnā koutou katoa, (te reo Māori). Thank you, Professor Mohan, thank you for inviting me to address this topic. I'd like to just quickly begin by acknowledging mana whenua for where I'm at which is the Kirikiriroa Hamilton, which is Ngāti Māhanga, Ngāti Wairere and Ngāti Āhua and also acknowledge the Kingitanga.

So dehumanisation, I'd like to begin with the concept of dangerous speech and if people are interested in that I'll just quickly post a link into the chat. But dangerous speech, the hallmarks of this, which you'll find on the website, is dehumanising language creating a fear of a mortal threat from a disfavoured or minority group which makes violence seem not just acceptable, but necessary. And it also involves portraying the target group as violating the purity of the in-group making violence a necessary method of preserving one's identity.

So those are three aspects. There's a lot more on the website, but when we focus in on the dehumanising language, I'm -- I took a piece from this article that has been put out in Australia, and I'll just again post the link in the chat so that you can access it. But just an exert from this article, it says "Facebook, and by relation Instagram Twitter, YouTube and LinkedIn, recognise dehumanisation as a particularly dangerous form of hatred as it removes moral objections one may have to enact violence, even mass violence, and against women and children and civilians more broadly within a target group. Explicit dehumanisation refers to classically dehumanising terms such as comparing a human group to animals, bacteria, filth, disease, weeds, subhuman beings, inanimate or non-living objects or supernatural creatures."

So I thought I would give you some really quick examples of what that looks like in practice, so I'm just going to quickly share my screen here, please bear with me.

So these are all taken from New Zealand Facebook pages, and so this is basically when coronavirus first came into India, Muslims and Tablighi Jamaat were targeted as spreaders of the virus. And here China is seen as producing the virus and then the Muslim community in India, particularly Tablighi Jamaat were blamed for spreading the virus. So

you can see that dehumanisation in the image, let alone the accuracy of whether this is what actually happened.

Here's another one, you know, it is a metaphor but again it's dehumanising in terms of referencing women to being a chicken and converting to KFC. This one you'll notice the language that I just had described in the article which is the Jihadi cockroaches and they're pinpointing people gathering for prayer under coronavirus restrictions without saying whether these are all within a bubble or family groups or so on, but this is the language that is being used to dehumanise.

And this is another example where, you know, again the person is just like -- they're acting innocent, "I don't know if it's true or not", but putting some really disgusting material on there, which easily, one, they could go and find out, and secondly is just quite abusive.

So I think a final point that I'd make on this, is that it's not just the content itself, like so if each of those was just an individual post in the world you'd look at it and think idiot or whatever it is you want to think, and carry on. But it's the sheer volume of this kind of content, and it is at such scale and it has a really significant impact, and really it's both the scale and the content that has the impact.

So I'll leave it at that for now, thank you.

>>MR KASHKARI: Assalamu alaikum everybody, kia ora katoa. I guess one of the challenges, as Anjum has highlighted, is all of this dehumanisation where they take the person away from it and even sort of talk about it being innocence. But then you think about it as a wider perspective of it, you get groups or groups of people, or even communities and nations, who, for their interests or to push forward their sort of agendas, they will dehumanise it, they will talk about, if I go back to Iraq war, for example, it talked about weapons of mass destruction, we had to go into do what we had to do. If you look at what happens in Palestine, oh Hamas is a terrorist organisation, hence we need to actually flatten the Gaza. If you go to Kashmir same thing, to terrorism and terrorists, we just need to sort of take them out, so it's okay to take this group out.

And this is happening around the world, and people forget that there is actually a person or a group of people who are there, who are vulnerable, who actually don't have unfortunately a lot of power that they can exert, but they become sort of victims of it. And then what happens as I can relate back to what happened prior to March 15th in New Zealand, things get normalised, they get really, really normalised. I used to be in meetings with people who were called Islamic terrorism, even our Prime Minister would talk about, people say not all Muslims are terrorists but all terrorists are Muslims.

That actually dehumanises that, and even if you look at what's happening right here in Aotearoa New Zealand at the moment, there's a lot of controversy that's gone around the Kashmir Files and what is reality is completely lost in dehumanisation of the Muslim community talking about what is fabricated lies, are being supported particularly for those groups, by those groups who have interests in it.

So it's really just taking the humanity out of the human being and portraying things in the way they want to portray it in order to oppress or put their views about the views of the oppressors. So I'll just leave it there for the time being and back to Mohan.

>>RINGA HĀPAI: Kia ora, thank you so much Anjum and Ikhlaq for that depiction of what dehumanisation looks like. That's really powerful and I think your examples, particularly in terms of the metaphors and the language and the narratives that are crafted are really powerful.

Anjum, I want to go back to the examples that you shared. One of the things that happens with many of those narratives is that those get shared by community leaders, if you will, or by political leaders, or people that are attached to mainstream political parties. Could you speak a little bit to that in terms of what really are the effects when this kind of dehumanising content gets mainstreamed through mainstream political parties in Aotearoa New Zealand?

>>MS RAHMAN: Yeah, thank you. One of the points I'll quickly make is that a lot of this content, and even though it's on New Zealand websites, so all of those were New Zealand-based Facebook groups and people living in New Zealand that were commenting, but a lot of the language is not in English. And so some of the worst stuff I couldn't put in front of you because it wasn't in English. So that's another factor, that it goes under the radar and we know that some of these ten companies, they have very little capacity to deal with material that isn't in English. And we've heard that 9% of Facebook content, for example, is in English, 9%, and they're just not dealing very well at all with the other 81%.

So the effects of dehumanisation and Islamophobia, first of all it's the mental and emotional health. When you're consistently and constantly getting messages that are telling you you're evil, you're bad, you know, using language like that, abusive language, it really has an impact on your mental health and well-being at an individual level. And especially, as I said, because it's the sheer volume of the content, it's the nature of the content, and with the effect on the mental health and then also impacts on your ability to work, your ability to interact with society.

In a global context, the impact of this kind of stuff is physical safety. So from the loss of life, to being punched while being pregnant, by acid thrown in faces, scarves being torn off and women filmed while that's happening, verbal abuse, all of these are real life things that have happened to Muslim women. And it's interesting that as Muslim women we sit here in this space where we're told that we get treated as second class citizens by Muslim men and Muslim countries, or even here, and then -- so not only are we portrayed as victims, but then we're also victimised as if I don't know what, I don't see the disconnect. So you think they're treating us as second class citizens but then you perpetrate violence against us because of that. It's pretty awful.

Another impact is the silencing, the doxing, the death threats, the rape threats, all of these things that journalists and other academics and so on that are facing, particularly Muslim women journalists, Muslim women academics, the apps that are putting Muslim women for sale and threatening to rape and impregnate them, all these kinds of things. You find that some people just drop off, they drop off-line, they delete their accounts, they cannot handle the volume of vitriol, which was of course the intent of the people that are making these kinds of posts, is they want to silence us. Which means where is our freedom of speech, they're directly attacking our freedom of speech. So if you actually believe in free speech you would want to protect our free speech from these kinds of things.

You get legislative restrictions on our ability to practise faith. France, for example, where it's illegal for girls to wear a hijab in school, it's illegal to where a burqa at the beach or in any public place; Belgium, of course India now and the issues that we're seeing in Karnataka and even the legal systems that are not there to protect us and to protect our faith. And in other circumstances, the rest of society would speak up about this, they would be allies, they would not allow this to happen. But because we are so dehumanised, that people just get into the space of not caring.

Our ability to participate in society, like we're being shut out of spaces, and you get into this defence mode of sticking into your own community, you're afraid to go out of the house alone. We had young women after the March 19(sic) attacks saying when they go on a bus they sit next to the door so they have a quick escape because they don't know what will happen; ability to access services, including health, education, employment, housing. I could give you so many stories, but I know we have limited time, of how these are denied in certain ways, you can't get a rental house, or your CV is just thrown in the bin, you're not considered, or you're dissuaded in school from taking certain subjects, all -- so many stories.

If you go to our website at Inclusive Aotearoa we have a whole range of stories, not just from the Muslim community, about these issues. And it impacts political participation as well as leadership and decision-making, when those opportunities are denied to us because we're seen as being less than, or being overlooked and set aside. And, you know, when we look at again effects of racism of this kind overseas you see measures put in place to prevent voting, for example, in the US, way fewer voting booths in black areas, gerrymandering, restrictive voter ID laws, not being given leave because they don't have it on a weekend day, and if you worked on the weekend well you need leave to go out to vote, which if you're a black person takes hours and hours and hours and not getting that leave, given wrong information and misinformation that your local voting site is closed so don't go there. All of these kind of tactics that are being used, and again because people are dehumanised it's, you know, the pushback just isn't there.

>>RINGA HĀPAI: Ngā mihi Anjum. Perhaps, Ikhlaq, you could build on that a little bit. But also wanted to offer a little bit of context with what you brought up with regard to the Kashmir Files, which is a film produced in India on the movement of Kashmiri pundits out of Kashmir, and which has sort of triggered multiple incidents of hate speech in India in theatres as the film has been platformed, including calls for killing Muslims, calls for Hindus to rape Muslim women. So that is the context within which the Muslim community has expressed its concern.

So the thing I wanted to bring up is, Anjum, as you point out how freedom of expression is used as a narrative to then discount the concerns. We are seeing this right now with regard to the Kashmir Files. As the censor is going through a review we have mainstream New Zealand politicians David Seymour, Melissa Lee, Winston Peters talking about how this violates or threatens freedom of expression. So could you speak to that in terms of how the narrative of freedom of expression is often used to circulate and enable dehumanising contents and the effects of that?

>>MR KASHKARI: Thanks Mohan. I just want to actually go back to, before I answer that question, I'd like to talk about impact of what Anjum was talking about in terms of on our youth as well. One of the biggest challenges we have had with the youth in New Zealand, in Aotearoa New Zealand is because they're called terrorists, or the language that's used for them to dehumanise them, a lot of them actually at school, or college, or universities, they don't want to be known to be Muslims because that basically makes them a target, again the dehumanisation of it. And also it depends on what race you are how you will be classified, and that also applies to what you call this concept of freedom of speech.

If I look at, for example, what's happening in Ukraine and everybody knows it's a terrible, terrible human tragedy what's happening in Europe and what's happening in Ukraine, and innocent people are getting killed. But what actually, when you look at what's happened in Ukraine in terms of, for example, refugees, in terms of sort of giving arms to Ukrainians and a Ukrainian person blowing a bridge and being a suicide bomber, that was all encouraged as being shown hero, whereas if that would happen in Palestine or anywhere else, that would be a terrorist and that sort of stuff.

So I think there's a huge impact on our youth in terms of from school through to jobs. Anjum talked about people actually really struggling, they actually would change names. So they would send their CV with their Muslim names, they wouldn't get an interview. As soon as they changed their name, call themselves John or Smith or whatever, same companies you actually were called for an interview for these companies. So again, dehumanisation there.

Now in terms of coming back to Kashmir Files, again it's a very selective narrative, because if you look at freedom of speech, as you all know, or if you don't you can probably Google yourself, Kashmir was in blockade of communication for over a year when India annexed it on 15 August 2019. And they had no telephones there, landlines, they had no mobiles, there was no internet, there was no local newspapers, there was no local TV or anything, so everything was complete blackout, couldn't talk because India was doing its operations. At that stage freedom of speech didn't exist.

And when you talk about, for example, what BJP leaders have been saying of lately, there was a conference of BJP leaders where they talked about Muslims, if you actually -- if a few hundred of us get up and kill a few million Muslims, that will clean up a lot of Muslims from the face of India. So that's actually okay to say and there's no repercussions of it.

But then if you take somebody like a student union person from Delhi University, I think it was, or something was Delhi University, and he was put behind bars, but just by raising issue of fascism and racism. And then you come back to New Zealand, same thing applies. And we have seen this time and again, we have seen it prior to March 15 where, if things were talked about, as I said earlier we accepted it, we were the silent majority that actually went -- I'd be in a meeting, we'll be talking about Islamic terrorism, Islamic terrorists and all this sort of stuff, language that was used, Jihadi brides, we just didn't say anything because we kept quiet and it normalised it.

But when it comes to something like, for example, David Seymour's statement, in his statement on Kashmir Files is that Mohdi said it's okay, it's a true story. But if you go back and read what the rest of the world said, it doesn't mean anything. And then you need to look back and Mohdi did in Gujarat, 2,000 Muslims were killed at that time when he was in power and he told people don't touch them, don't stop Hindu mobs killing people. So that was okay; and then he became Prime Minister.

We have really forgotten that he was banned from entering the US, but because narrative has changed, because India has become more economic power, particularly in New Zealand it's actually becoming quite strong in politics and very large number of, I would say, people that are aligned to right wing have established their positions and they're able to get that narrative that they want. So the lies are being turned into the truth and truth are turned into lies. Just to give you one more figure, if you look at talk about genocide of Kashmiri pundits, you just need to go to United Nations, they have issued a genocide alert on Kashmir.

So this sort of rhetoric that's being built is actually to commit genocide of people of Kashmir, the Muslims of Kashmir. And if you look at what happened even 1989 when they talk about -- we're talking about 59 and, again, terrible, terrible any innocent life was killed, 59 Hindu pundits were killed at that time and around 1,600 Muslims were killed. So that's classified as a genocide, whereas 100,000 Muslims killed in Kashmir does not classify as genocide. So there is your differences and in the narrative and how it's portrayed.

>>RINGA HĀPAI: Thanks for offering that context, Ikhtlaq. I wanted to move on to thinking about solutions and really, given your activist work in challenging the various forms of dehumanisation and various structures, I wanted to ask what are the kinds of strategies you draw upon to resist dehumanisation and Islamophobia?

>>MR KASHKARI: There's a number of things we do. In the past it was normalised and we were actually really quiet and didn't talk about it. I think actually what's personally made me talk more about it is actually March 15th. I just said to myself I'm not going to be a silent majority, so I will speak up and I'll speak more loudly than I have ever done before.

And so to me one thing is don't be a -- we need to stop being a silent majority, we do need to speak up. If you do see something wrong then we need to call it. Don't just -- let's not just ignore it.

Second thing is we need to actually continuously work with the government and the agencies to break that glass ceiling that Anjum was talking about earlier. We need to be able to have people of all sort of, what you call as, all the ethnicities and cultures and

whatever in New Zealand we have, we need to have some representation of them at certain levels. I'm not really -- I'm not advocating for because somebody is a Muslim or a Hindu, or a Sikh, or Jewish, you should be put in a place, I think it's really important that they have skills and capability to be able to do the job as well.

But I think what we have at the moment is glass ceilings and they need to break. So we're actually pushing, in discussions with various government agencies and we've been having lots of kōrero on some of those, how do we ensure where we can have multiple identities and those identities are celebrated, they're not -- so I can be a New Zealander, I can be a Muslim, and I can be Kashmiri, I don't have to choose one of them or two of them, I can be all of them. And we should be able to celebrate and we should be able to leverage off it. I should be able to say, we should be able to say as a Muslim I can connect Muslim culture, as a Kashmiri I can bring Kashmiri rich culture and as a New Zealander I can do all of these great things in the world. So we should be able to celebrate that. I think that's something we have started having a really good kōrero with the government and the agencies.

Saying that, a lot of discussions we are having we're having that continuously and we're having repetitive discussions. We are achieving some success, but I think there is a lot of work to be done and the speed at which we're achieving it, we need to pick that speed up and do it faster. So then some of the challenges there. And funding, for example from the government perspective, we can say whatever we like, we don't have funding to make it happen so it's not going to happen, so allowing for that funding and resources to make those positive changes.

>>MS RAHMAN: I'll take over, I've got so much to put into this space in terms of what I've been drawing on in terms of the activist work. So I think, particularly back in the early 2000s and with the events happening internationally, it was a time when we realised the importance of media and the narratives of the media, because they were very harsh against the Muslim community. And so I guess that was a time when I started to try and build a media voice by, you know, trying to write opinion pieces and be visible in the media.

I really have to acknowledge people like Willie Jackson when he had his Eye to Eye programme and then the ability to be on Close Up and so on, that being able to just speak back to some of the very awful rhetoric and political rhetoric was incredibly important. That's also why I got into politics for a bit and so I tried that for about a decade, not really successfully, but at least I was in spaces and being able to put points of view forward.

Also, you know, I've been to so many protests and protest activities, whether more recent times joining in protests on the CAA or last month in Auckland outside the consulate around the banning of the hijab, I've been to anti-war marches, the women's marches, child abuse, against the Iraq war back in the day. So physically raising my voice as much as possible. Submissions to legislation, government inquiries and consultations, both at local and central government, so things like the gun control laws. And I still remember walking -- the select committee came to Kirikiriroa and I asked for a police escort to be able to go and present to that select committee because I felt so unsafe at that time.

I've submitted to the public sector legislation bill, the Films, Videos and Publications Classification Act which deals with our censorship laws, counterterrorism legislation, funding of sexual violence services, again just using those opportunities to have my voice heard. I use my social media, I used to, when blogs were a much bigger thing, I used to blog regularly and try and get writing and thought out there, I used to contribute to group blogs such as the Standard and the Hand Mirror. And, you know, as part of the team of the Islamic Women's Council we tried to raise these issues with government from around 2015, 2016, and of course part of dehumanisation, I believe it was that dehumanisation that meant that we weren't listened to and we weren't taken seriously.

Most recently I started Inclusive Aotearoa Collective Tahono with the support of a group of people, and it's a project that really is about bringing communities together from very different sectors of the community and not even just looking at ethnic or faith diversity, but all the diversities and all the different ways that -- wonderful ways that humans express themselves. And as part of that, and for me a critical and crucial part of this work, is honouring Te Tiriti. And within this organisation we've really tried hard to build it as a Te Tiriti-based organisation, we have a pou tikanga co-lead with the Iwi Chairs Forum, and we really work on our training, our tikanga, our understanding of things like Matike Mai and constitutional reform, because I think for a lot of these issues, like we face Islamophobia and dehumanisation, but other communities also face dehumanisation and the Māori community faces it really strongly. So we have a responsibility for whatever we want for us, we want them for all those communities as well. So it's really important to work across communities around some of these issues.

>>RINGA HĀPAI: Ngā mihi, it's so beautiful what you talk about in terms of building those registers of solidarity and really beginning, in many ways, by listening to the voices of tangata whenua and anchoring the struggles in Te Tiriti.

One of the things that is also really powerful in your articulations is this idea that there is a vision for the future in terms of how that struggle continues. But that is also juxtaposed in the backdrop of this ongoing articulation of not being heard. I have heard you articulate this, Ikhlāq. I've you heard you articulate this, Anjum, that community voices, activist voices keep bringing up the issues and yet it seems that those voices are not heard.

So that's sort of my last wrap-around prompt, which is what are the solutions you potentially see going forward in terms of addressing dehumanisation and Islamophobia? Perhaps we can begin with you Anjum, and then go to you, Ikhlāq.

>>MS RAHMAN: Sure. Thank you for all the lovely comments, by the way, I really appreciate them. So one of the things is that a lot of the solutions do need to be collective, which is why, you know, we take a collective approach to it, because -- and it kind of came from my experience that we were just one organisation, like really felt like we were butting our heads against the wall, it was easy to ignore; but when we work as a collective it's much harder to be ignored.

Some of the solutions in a more practical sense, so one of the roles that I have is as a co-chair of the Christchurch Call Advisory Network, and the Christchurch Call is about reducing or removing terrorist and violent extremist content online, and it's really fun in terms of, you know what Ikhlāq said earlier, in trying to define what is a terrorist and what is a violent extremist, and certainly those things, there's no agreed definition even as we are now.

But regardless of that, there are things that we could look at such as product liability. So all of these tech platforms they have no liability around what is appearing on their website. And we know, you know, there's ample research, there's a reasonable amount of research on Facebook, but I know the other platforms are having impacts as well, Facebook's currently being sued about the impact they've had on the genocide of Rohingya, there's research or information out there about the impact they're having in Tigray, India, the Tek Fog app. There was just a series of articles last week, one of the takeaways from that article was that the BJP was effectively being charged much less for the same reach than congress or other parties because of the way that the algorithms and the engagement works. So we need to start holding these platforms liable for the design of their product that is causing this kind of harm.

Secondly, I think because a lot of these platforms using algorithms, so whether it's, you know, whether you hit your Facebook likes or whatever, liking a post, and it will

make -- the more likes you have and the more shares it will make it more viral. Interestingly with Facebook they have weighted the angry button, given it five times the weight of a like button. So if your post generates more outrage and more anger and upset, then it will be more viral because of the way they've designed their algorithm. And there are many instances of the way the Google search engines work and so on.

So I've written a paper, it's on the Internet New Zealand website. I should have had the link handy, but I'll post it, it's on my social media on Twitter, around algorithmic audits and how we might stand up in infrastructure to go and audit these companies to see what impact their algorithms have. We need the regulation to do that, we need more transparency.

But I want to tautoko what Ikhlāq said about investment in community, resourcing communities. This is why this project is a strongly community-based project, because for me the answer to these things lie in the power of community. And so we're about how can we bring communities together, create the forums, create the opportunities, facilitate the conversations, because if we don't devolve power into these communities then we can't solve the problems.

And last thing very quickly I'll say, if you really want to solve the problems let's get the basics; poverty, education, housing, health. Like absolutely if you're going to have people sleeping in cars and not having food and all of the stuff, you're never solving these issues. You cannot say you can solve dehumanisation, racism and all those things without solving the basics for everyone. Thank you.

>>MR KASHKARI: Thank you, Anjum, that was wonderful. If I could add a little bit to it from where I stand, I think I can see; first and foremost we need to recognise dehumanisation is a crime, because unless we acknowledge and accept it, we can't move forward. So once we acknowledged it then we can look at in terms of -- we can't ignore what Anjum just said, people sleeping in the street, not having the food because that then is visible to you.

And one of the things is standards. If you want to dehumanise things you need to have human rights standards right across. So we can't use one scale of human rights for one group and another one for anybody else, so we have to actually have one set of rules which are applicable to the entire community.

And one of the challenges that we have is being able to -- when there's dehumanisation, the big challenge that happens, you live in a bubble, you isolate yourself from the community. So I think to break that bubble we need to actually embrace and we need to encourage people to come out, we need people to be able to feel safe, not only

physically but also mentally and emotionally, to be able to integrate and be able to have a communication. So I think that's a really important component of that.

Inclusivity, more inclusivity, whether it's cultural, religious and designing the solutions and services that are actually provided to our communities, they take those into account. And it recognises that there may be some different sort of ways a service is delivered.

I'll give you a very quick example which may sound really odd. I'm aware of somebody who actually helped one of his employees as a Muslim person, she was going to get a loan from a loan shark, 20% to buy a car, so this person actually lent her the money, said you go and -- you can pay part of your -- a bit from your salary. But there was a court case, Justice Department did not recognise as a kindness, they did not accept that person's witness because they felt that that person actually, because they have got a favour from this person saying they're wrong, they're actually trying to protect this person. So that's from a culturally -- people are sometimes don't understand why somebody will do that, because in Islam accepting of paying of interest is not seen as a good thing.

So really trying to understand the cultural differences are there that may actually have those solutions that we have that tailor for some of them as well. And as I mentioned earlier, really important to have that multiple sort of ability where you can have multiple identities. And one of the big things, media coverage. And how media portrays things and because, I guess really media is commercial entity, they sell sensation, sensationalism sells, hence they will portray it, but if we can actually have that positive interaction with media, then that will be one of the ways forward as well.

And then grassroots connections. We can only change things when we are connected. We can talk at leadership level whatever we like, but if the grassroots is disconnected then we are disconnected. So really finding those integration points, finding the methods. Like, for example, one of the things we've been talking about in Auckland is why can't we have local sort of community groups that can actually find employment for the locals within the locals, so if you have local businessman, local community so you can find local solutions for the local problems. So really connecting community at a grassroots level will be another wonderful thing to sort of overcome that dehumanisation.

>>RINGA HĀPAI: Kia ora, thank you Anjum and Ikhlāq, a lot of powerful ideas there in terms of solutions that go all the way from the local to the meso-level structures to macro-level structures.

Let's go to the questions, we have some amazing questions. I'm going to begin with a first question related to social media, because indeed, as you point out, Anjum, social media is one of the fundamental sites that gets weaponised in circulating that disinformation. So the question is do you think the social media are exacerbating the hate, or that the hate already exists and it's being made visible online and then spreading?

>>MS RAHMAN: It's not an either/or question, it's a both/and, okay, so the hate does already exist. But without these algorithms and the way that it spreads and the way that they're designed to make outrageous content viral, it means that more people see it than would otherwise have seen it. So it's that ability to spread.

And the way that human beings are wired, everyone will be like "I'm a real individual, I have my own views" or whatever, but the fact is we are influenced by others, that's why people do it. When you see a whole lot of people agree with that thing and say the same thing, then you think oh maybe there's something to it. That's a natural instinct. And when you don't realise that there's many, many people that you see that are saying this thing are actually computerised bots, automated responses or paid actors, then your perception that actually a lot of people agree with this thing so it must be right is being skewed.

So it makes that dehumanisation, one, more visible, more acceptable, we've talked about becoming normalised, yeah.

>>RINGA HĀPAI: Ikhlāq, go ahead.

>>MR KASHKARI: I was going to say is if you look at the recent survey from Australia that's just been released this week, they talk about sort of hate on social media has grown by 18% -- sorry not 18%, 18 times more since March 15th 2019. So it is exploding and, as Anjum said, the challenge we have is these bots and the way the systems, the search engines are designed, so if you search for something it will think that you actually want more, so it will actually automatically recommend you some of those sites that are even, you know, more and more that aligns with what you were looking for earlier.

So if you look at the investment that some of these people are making, or countries are making that promote that dehumanisation or Islamophobia is enormous in there. You can see, for example, recently in New Zealand -- actually let me go back to prior to March 19. I could see it that when Mark Jihadi, because March 15th happened just prior to Mark Jihadi was going to come from Syria to New Zealand, so there was a whole lot of discussions taking place in New Zealand, it was talkback radio, internet news, they were all talking about we will have Islamic Jihadi coming New Zealand, blah blah, the danger of it.

And I saw a massive spike in the hate mail that I was getting and the phone calls I was getting. And that was basically as a result of the action that was taking place somewhere else where all of a sudden that spiked in New Zealand. If we talk about Jihadi bride when our previous Prime Minister made a comment about Jihadi brides going from New Zealand to Syria to marry these IS people, and then there was a massive spike in New Zealand against hate.

So really all of that, that's all triggered by online and it's getting every day faster and faster and more and more content and more people connected into it, and then bots which play a huge role. So I actually think a huge impact of that.

>>RINGA HĀPAI: Something else, Ikhlāq, your example points out is that the online system is intertwined with local politics and local politicians, there are politicians that clearly also profit from that circulation of hate.

>>MR KASHKARI: And if they don't get the message they're getting, some of those countries are authoritarian, they would stop them and say -- the bigger countries and powerful countries, IT companies shall do what they're being told to do.

>>RINGA HĀPAI: Particularly the IT, the digital infrastructures and hate leads to another corresponding question, which is, and I will club two questions together, which is "I understand that this is a global conversation but in terms of Aotearoa, do you think our government is doing enough, what more do you think it can do?" And related question then is, "what are the platforms that are available for Muslims in order to articulate their voices and to be consulted, is there enough consultation taking place right now?"

>>MS RAHMAN: I'll let you go first brother Ikhlāq.

>>MR KASHKARI: Look there's a lot of conversations that are taking place. And I must admit every day I'm probably involved -- every week I'm probably involved with at least three or four sort of meetings or hui with the government agencies that take place. That is in addition to all other hui that you have in terms of non-strategic nature. Yes, there are a lot of discussions taking place and there have been a lot of discussions that have taken place in the past. As I said earlier, though is the speed, the pace at which the outcomes are happening or those kōrero, those discussions are resulting in changes.

Let's talk about hate speech laws. It was three years ago that at that point in time we decided we'd have hate speech laws and be written in New Zealand. We are actually three years it hasn't happened, we are three years late. Why is it taking us three years to do them? That's just an example.

So in terms of so, yes, discussions are taking place, and I must admit, this is the most we have ever done by any government, and I take hats off for Prime Minister who has actually initiated these discussions, whereas previously they weren't happening. Even when we were talking nobody was listening to us. We were talking and talking and talking but nobody was listening at that time. At least somebody is at least having that discussion, whether they're hearing or listening or acting on that may be a secondary issue.

There has to be in terms of urgency and delivering the outcomes, otherwise you get frustrated around having too many meetings and no outcomes. And then there has to be funding to make sure, in terms of those initiatives are implemented. I think they are the challenges, otherwise yes, kōrero is happening.

>>MS RAHMAN: Yeah, so my answer is like there is stuff happening, you know, so it's the police, for example, have been working for a couple of years almost now, at least 18 months, on the recording of hate crimes, peace work, and they're looking at various other aspects around training and so on. MSD is leading the social cohesion work, Ministry of Justice is leading the National Action Plan Against Racism work. And in various departments there is stuff that is happening, but what we're not seeing yet, it's all still frameworks and plans and talking to people, they've taken seriously Royal Commission recommendation to involve communities, they're not yet at co-design, but they're at the involve stage of talking to communities. And, yeah, I guess as a person in the community it's frustrating that we need action now and having to wait through the processes.

My second concern is that, you know, while the government has committed to implementing all the Royal Commission recommendations, opposition parties haven't. And so the social cohesion framework, I don't know, hopefully it will come out sometime this year, the Action Plan Against Racism likely not to come out until next year, and then we have a change of government, and then what? Does all this work get lost? Are they going to commit a budget to it, is this government going to commit a budget to it and what is the budget?

So for all of you lovely people who are listening, we need to push, we need to push hard that no matter what government there is, I cannot believe there would be a political party that is saying we don't want people to be safe, we're happy for a terrorist attack like those in Christchurch to happen again, like I know that none of them feel that way, therefore they should be committing to the Royal Commission recommendations and committing to these work programmes that have had a lot of investment but need a whole lot more investment

And thirdly, when that investment happens it can't just sit in government, it can't just sit in the public service, that investment has to come out into communities, it's critical. And for me that is one of the blocks, for example, with the family and sexual violence work, the money has been committed but the organisations are not seeing that money on the ground, the ones that are struggling to provide services in family and sexual violence, you know, we need to make sure that the people that are doing the work actually get the resourcing.

>>RINGA HĀPAI: Kia ora, thank you so much, Ikhlāq and Anjum, for those powerful responses. Unfortunately we are at 4.56 and we are going to move toward a wrapping you. I just want to thank you both for your inspiring work and your activism and your ongoing struggle to transform these spaces of hate, and also your work in community in the grassroots and building infrastructures for voices to be heard.

I want to thank the partners, particularly Community Research for the webinar support and the many volunteers who have supported with putting up this event. The recording will be made available via YouTube and the website depending upon the IP agreement terms each speaker has signed. Please remember to visit the Facebook page Decol 2020(sic), and please also join the Pecha Kucha marathon for racial justice later in the week.

As we wrap up, I want to once again acknowledge you, Anjum, I want to acknowledge you, Ikhlāq, and the struggles of our many Muslim brothers and sisters against the infrastructures of disinformation and hate. I want to wrap up, inviting us all to witness, perhaps witnessing is an entry point to challenging hate. A lot of research suggests that bystander interventions are really powerful in addressing racist infrastructures.

I will wrap up with a quote from the poem Hum Dekhenge by the poet Faiz Ahmad Faiz that has formed the basis for struggles against Islamophobia in my part of the world in India. The poet has become so powerful that it is now being incorporated by right wing hate groups and being attacked in order to turn it on its head. So this poem translates into "we shall see", inviting us to witness, and this translation I'm going to share with you is by Mustansir Dalvi.

"Innovatively we shall also see the day that was promised to us decreed on the tablet of eternity. When dark peaks of torment and tyranny will be blown away like cotton fluff, when the earth's beating heart will pulsate beneath our broken feet. When crackling, crashing lightning will smite the heads of our tormenters. When from the seat of the almighty every pedestal will lie displaced. Then the dispossessed we, we who kept the

faith will be installed to our inalienable agency, every crown will be flung, each thrown brought down."

So witnessing is an invitation for us to build spaces that are based upon connection, that are based on solidarity, and that are committed to the voices of those who have been systematically targeted by the forces of hate, colonialism, racism and capitalist oppression. Thank you once again for joining.