

# BRISTOL **WOMEN'S** VOICE

7<sup>th</sup> August 2024

Dear Sarah

## **Re: the far-right unrest and the safety of all women in Bristol**

We write to you as a group of 15 specialist women's organisations in Bristol to express our concern about the unrest at the weekend and to ask what plans are being developed to keep women safe in Bristol, especially Black and minoritised women, in light of further planned disruption this week and beyond.

Many of the women we work with are scared. We have colleagues working from home for fear of leaving the house; women and families from migrant communities are being advised to stay at home for their safety; women's community groups are cancelling summer trips with asylum-seeking and refugee families as they are afraid of attacks if they are visible as a group; others are temporarily closing specialist services for extremely vulnerable women

Due to the rising incidents of racism and Islamophobia, many women and children feel unsafe visiting the mosque and other community venues and could refrain from attending for some time out of fear of becoming victims. We know women wearing headscarves are a particular target for hate crime.

This situation is intolerable.

We are concerned about the about the safety of our staff, the women we work with and all women in Bristol, (particularly those from Black and racially minoritised backgrounds).

We are concerned about increasing levels of domestic abuse and other forms of male violence against women. There is significant research that highlights how, despite their differences, in general terms, far-right actors share similar perspectives, such as misogyny with the perception of women as inferior, a sense of sexual entitlement, objectification, and the endorsement of sexual assault. They also promote the idealization of traditional gender roles, wherein women not only assume specific roles but are also regarded as objects in need of protection, and often express the views that see gender equality as going too far.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Mehran, W. Rami, L. and Enwereazu, O. (2023) *Comparative analysis of gendered frames in far-right rhetoric in the West* in *Behavioural Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression* [Full article: Comparative analysis of gendered frames in far-right rhetoric in the West \(tandfonline.com\)](https://doi.org/10.1080/15432197.2023.2244444)

One of those arrested in Southport was identified by police as having been in previous contact with them because of domestic abuse. There are many women and children amongst the rioters as we have seen from images on TV and social media and there are reports in from the north-east that a Black woman and an Asian woman were assaulted by rioters and dragged from a bus last Friday night.

After major sporting tournaments (football) there is a lot of focus on any increases in domestic violence – we know what can happen when men fuelled by alcohol/drugs who have been violent on the streets (to women and men) return home.

We ask you to urgently provide reassurance to the women we work with about gendered plans being developed to protect refugee, asylum seeking and all Black and racially minoritised women, men and their families.

We ask this both for the short-term in response to upcoming planned disruptions and to address ongoing issue of racism, Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hate.

We also urge you to advise us of what additional steps you will be taking to protect all women from the threat of increased male violence in Bristol.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Katy Taylor, Director, Bristol Women's Voice

Azza Mustafa, Coordinator, Sadaga Group

Bryony Ball and Meggan Baker, Founders, Survivors Leading Essential Education and Change

Claire Dormand, CEO, Lovewell Ltd

Gisela De Bernardo, Representative, Latin American Community Support CIC

Jenny Riley, CEO, One25

Julia Busfield, Director, Beloved

Laila Garzon Deguer, Founder, Latinas In Bristol CIC

Layla Ismail, Development Manager, Refugee Women of Bristol

Maria Viner, CEO, Mothers 4 Mothers

Naomi Sailsbury, CEO, Self-Injury Support

Rachel Mostyn, Co-Founder & Joint CEO, Women's Work Lab

Sabina Zillul, Chair, Bristol Bangladeshi Women's Group

Suad Yusuf, Founder, Somali Kitchen

Warda Ibrahim, Managing Director, TALO Community