

[The People's Review of Prevent](#) by Prof. John Holmwood & Dr Layla Aitlhadj 22nd February 2022

The People's Review of Prevent launched its [report](#) on the Government's Prevent strategy on 15th February 2022. The Report **gives voice to the civil society groups and community organisations disparaged by the review** conducted by William Shawcross, the current government-appointed reviewer of Prevent. Additionally, the Report **points to multiple accounts of the harms to children and young people caught up in the Prevent machinery.**

Key findings include:

- Contrary to the perception created by the Prevent strategy, **there is no problem of “integration” of British Muslim communities** and no basis for regarding them and their families with suspicion.
- **Prevent is discriminatory** in how it approaches far-right extremism differently from that of Islamist extremism. Far-right extremism is seen as a problem of individuals rather than communities.
- By defining as ‘extremist’ views and actions that are a normal part of a healthy and functioning democracy, **Prevent undermines freedom of expression.**
- **Prevent targets actions and behaviours which are not in themselves illegal** and for which there is no evidence that they have any relation to future terrorist offences.
- Prevent relies on profiling through Prevent Priority Areas that **disproportionately target Muslim communities and poor communities**; it also takes signs among young people of ordinary identity development and explorations in belonging as indications of ‘riskiness’, and sanctions their activism.
- **Prevent undermines the proper safeguarding obligations of social workers, teachers and health professionals.** It does so by bringing children and young people under a pervasive net of surveillance. This includes the creation of a national curriculum in ‘fundamental British values’ in England and Wales that is solely determined by national security interests.
- **Prevent is an abuse of individual rights to privacy** and the protection of data and information held about them, especially in the case of children.
- **Prevent is overwhelmingly directed at children and young people** where it represents an abuse of their rights and the obligation to make their needs and welfare central to public policy.
- **There is no national security justification** for Prevent's policies and practices in education or other services provided for them.
- **Prevent must be abolished.**

In his foreword to the Report, Professor Conor Gearty, QC, writes: “This report is an expression of critical engagement by those who are worried by the ever-expanding Prevent agenda. **It is a voice that demands to be heard by all politicians and policymakers, especially those interested not only in critique but in putting the case for positive change as well.**”

Professor Fionnuala Ní Aoláin, UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms while Countering Terrorism, writes: “It is my sincere hope that this Report will enable a broader and necessary conversation to take place about the operation of the current Prevent strategy in the United Kingdom.”

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