

From the Office of Charles Clarke

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Charles Clarke
Labour's Home Secretary

It is with considerable regret that I am writing to inform you that because of opposition from the Liberal Democrats and the Conservatives, the Government's proposed offence of incitement to religious hatred had to be removed from the Serious Organised Crime and Police Bill in the House of Lords on the 5 April. This means that the current offence of incitement to racial hatred cannot therefore be amended to cover incitement to religious hatred at this time.

We understand that this legislation was of vital importance to the Muslim community. But the reason we cannot pass this legislation is because both the Liberal Democrats and the Conservatives have blocked the legislation in Parliament. **The Liberal Democrats and the Conservatives made it clear that they were not willing to see this measure become law.** They bear full responsibility for blocking this part of the Bill. I am sure that you and other members of the Muslim community will take very careful note of that, particularly the opposition of the Liberal Democrats on this issue.

However, I can assure you that the Labour Party remains firmly of the view that there should be equality for those of all faiths, including the Muslim community. We cannot see why it is right to have protection in law for Jews and Sikhs, but wrong to extend it to other communities like the Muslim community.

It remains our firm and clear intention to give people of all faiths the same protection against incitement to hatred on the basis of their religion.

I will be writing to you again shortly to outline our future plans on this issue.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'C Clarke'.

Charles Clarke
Labour's Home Secretary

Britain *forward* not back

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