

JBIMA Editorial

Prof Sharif Kaf Al-Ghazal, Editor in Chief

Assalamo Alaikom all,

A new year is upon us; 2025 was an eventful year, but 2026 shows no sign of calm. Both domestically, and globally, we live in uncertain, volatile times, and we must remain vigilant and alert. With that in mind, I thought it would be worth thinking about the scourge of Islamophobia in the NHS more deeply in this editorial.

Islamophobia is not a new phenomenon and it is certainly not confined to the NHS alone. It rears its ugly head across society, but the growing strength of the far right and attempts to hide Islamophobia behind “Free Speech” have made it more difficult to combat in recent months.

A colleague of ours, Dr Hina Shahid, wrote a powerful piece in the BMJ a few months ago detailing how the denial of Islamophobia is harming Muslim doctors in the NHS and made mention of institutional Islamophobia within the organisation that seeps down to hospitals and health centres. Doctors feeling unsafe in their place of work is deeply troubling, and some ironically face hostility from the very people they are seeking to treat.

What makes the situation even more troubling is the seeming lack of progress from the NHS or the government on this issue. Our BIMA President, Dr Sahira Dar, has written to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Wes Streeting on this. There are reports that the government is in its final stages of confirming a definition of anti-Muslim hatred, but the fact that the definition makes no mention of Islamophobia – a subtly different term – is concerning.

The government, and by contrast the NHS in its practice, seem too scared of upsetting “free speech” campaigners who are against the use of the term Islamophobia as they think that any critique of Islam would not be allowed. This is absolutely not the case, and whilst we want people to be able to speak their mind and share opinions freely, it must be done without causing offence and harm to others.

Furthermore, there is also irony in that the UK, being so dependent on international medical graduates, is beginning to haemorrhage overseas trained doctors due to the rising tide of hostility against migrants. Instead of cherishing these doctors and treating them with the respect they deserve, the NHS is giving them no choice but to leave due to a lack of leadership on this issue; another example of attitudes trickling down from the top. Many migrant doctors are Muslim, but many others are not, and regardless of the faith they practice, they should be able to work in an environment which celebrates their diversity and achievement, and allows them to thrive.

It is worth mentioning that 2025 witnessed the first edition of the British Muslim Health Awards. I would like to thank colleagues at BIMA for their efforts in organising this fantastic event on the 13th of December in Birmingham. It was an opportunity to reflect on how far BIMA has come since its humble beginnings in 2013 and the work of many has not gone unnoticed. A lot of what BIMA achieved in 2025 was mentioned in the Awards too, as the organisation grew with over 1,000 new members joining and the community impact work of activities such as the Lifesavers campaign and advocacy efforts increased too.

On a final note as we welcome 2026, the people of Gaza still live precariously. As we think about the new goals we set ourselves, the people of Gaza think purely about survival. The October ceasefire has been broken repeatedly and there are still barriers to the entry of humanitarian relief and medical aid to the strip. Do remember them in your prayers and continue to shine a light on their struggles.

We ask Allah to grant us a prosperous 2026 and a year in which we have much to celebrate.

Wassalam.

Prof. Sharif Kaf Al-Ghazal
JBIMA, Editor in Chief