Message from the Director

This year the Independent Review of Prevent led by William Shawcross was released after a three-year delay, amid deep concerns about its objectivity as well as allegations that the Home Office had been improperly involved in the review process.

The Shawcross Report shocked us all in its lack of academic or evidential soundness, and in its clear drift towards a more authoritarian Prevent that will impact governance in cases of Muslims in particular, but which also lays a pattern for deeper authoritarianism in leadership.

This unity of purpose called for another response that would be more academically sound, as well as being rooted in our experience and the experiences of our clients: this resulted in an 85-page report, The People’s Review of Prevent: A Response to the Shawcross Review.

The report was accompanied by a Joint Statement signed by more than 200 individuals representing civil society and academic groups, calling for the Shawcross Review, as well as the Home Office’s approval of all its recommendations, to be withdrawn.

With this, the year brought ample opportunities. Prevent Watch and the People’s Review of Prevent were approached to contribute submissions to a number of reports as experts, including reports for the United Nations, and the independent counter terrorism commission organised by the Bingham Institute, where our evidence was well received.

As always, our priority and core purpose was at the heart of what we did this year, which is to support those encountering Prevent, especially young people. This became particularly urgent towards the end of the year, as activism, specifically pro-Palestinian activism, became increasingly conflated with terrorism.

Thank you for your continued support of our work.

Dr Layla Aitlhadj

Director at Prevent Watch

Co-Chair of the People’s Review of Prevent

WE HAVE SUPPORTED

640+

PEOPLE TO DATE
Prevent Watch Client

“The Prevent trainers implied that anyone criticising Prevent is ‘a terrorist sympathiser’.”

Helpline
640+ individuals supported to date

Research
3 contributions to research reports and 5 briefings submitted to various unions

Research
8 thought-leading opinion pieces...

Litigation
6 cases in process
A Response to the Shawcross Review

Context and Summary

We did not hold high hopes for the government’s “independent review”. The terms of reference of the Shawcross-led Independent Review of Prevent were restrictive and when finally published after a lengthy delay, completely ignored the substantial criticisms of, and concerns about Prevent from many different voices.

In terms of its academic integrity, it was sorely lacking. How many submissions it was based upon, and from whom these submissions came, were not made publicly available. We do not know which - if any - experts from different public services were consulted during the review, and Islamophobic think tank reports made up the bulk of the evidence. Only six Prevent cases and three Channel interventions were used to illustrate its findings.

In addition, the government approved all its 34 recommendations at the same time the report was published which was unsurprising given the review was drafted in close collaboration with the Home Office.

The defects of the report were so substantial that Mr Shawcross’s recommendations had no secure grounding. In fact, we realised that a careful consideration of his evidence should logically have led to very different conclusions.
The People’s Review of Prevent

- 200+ Academic Sources Cited
- 19 Major Reports on Prevent Cited
- Based on 564 Prevent Cases*
- 10 Members of Expert Panels for Peer Review
- (this can be a tiny bar so that the 0 is understood)
- 0 Channel Cases**

The Independent Review of Prevent by William Shawcross

- Less than 10 Academic Sources Cited
- 0 Major Reports on Prevent Cited
- Based on 3 Prevent Cases***
- 0 Members of Expert Panels+
- 6 Channel Cases

*This included submissions to this report
**The report sought to address Prevent, which is distinct from Channel.
***No mention of any submissions to the report about Prevent.
+No mention of any expert panels or any peer or other review process.
Findings:
The Shawcross Report is
- ideologically driven rather than evidence driven
- reinforces authoritarianism by placing Prevent under a 'political commissariat' within the Home Office, with no accountability
- displays clear bias against Islam and Muslims at all levels, while excusing the far right
- is not sustained by the data available and in fact the recommendations go against its own logic

Weak Evidence Base
- Of the 333 footnotes, most are to media reports, right-wing think tank reports and official documents
- Fewer than 10 academic sources
- only three Channel cases featured
- only six Prevent cases used
- no analysis or evidence of the submissions made
- no triangulation of submissions with secondary data or other research reports

Our Recommendation in the Response to Shawcross Report:

We call on Parliament to declare a moratorium on the implementation of the recommendations and to reject the report.

The Joint Statement for withdrawal of the Shawcross Review and his Recommendations was signed by over 200 civic society organisations, experts and academics

2023
2024
PREVENT WATCH
Supporting people impacted by Prevent

Helpline: 03333 443 396  contact@preventwatch.org  www.preventwatch.org