

## **Conference on Solidarity and Social Cohesion**

British Organisation of People of Indian Origin is planning a conference on the above theme to take place in March 2012.

Consultation meetings are being organised all over the country. From the meetings that have already taken place it has emerged that there is widespread anxiety about a number of issues.

1. Islam phobia blames many for the actions of the few, or uses the perversion of a great religion by a few fanatics as the basis for an attack on the whole religion. People from other minority religious groups have also been affected by the on-going hysteria. For instance, Sikhs have been mistaken for Muslims on account of their beards.
2. Unemployment, particularly among young people, is causing grave concern.
3. Educational opportunities are being denied to poorer sections of society, due to tuition fees etc., which is piling up problems for the future.
4. Discriminatory legislation is affecting visible minorities in order to appease racists. For instance, language qualification for spouses coming from non-EU countries, arbitrary targets for migrants, attempts to impose salary limits on those who have settled here in good faith expecting permanent settlement.
5. Growth of extreme rightwing organisations, like the English Defence League, and their intimidatory tactics. It is in the nature of fascism that once such organisations are established and allowed to intimidate one group in society they soon move on to do the same to others. Even trades union leaders have been subject to abuse and threats.
6. Panic measures by the government have led to arbitrary arrests, detentions, and 'stop and search'.

All these and much else will be discussed at this conference. Expected participants include community groups, voluntary organisations providing services, faith groups, and trade unions. Government officials dealing with community cohesion and the police also will be invited. This is intended to be an inclusive conference and no-one who is working for social harmony will be excluded. There will be workshops to cover the main themes. Those interested in presenting papers for publication are requested to get in touch with the organisers. Others who are willing to organise working parties or chair them need to contact us.

*All organisations and groups participating in this conference will be posted on:  
bopionews.com and bopio.org.uk.*