# Scottish Labour leader Anas Sarwar condemns divisive by-election advert as blatantly racist



The recent by-election campaign in Hamilton, Larkhall, and Stonehouse has ignited fierce controversy, mainly due to an advertisement from a certain political party that has drawn sharp rebukes from the Scottish Labour leader, Anas Sarwar. This advertisement, which reportedly prioritises the needs of the Pakistani community, has been labeled by Sarwar as “blatantly racist.” This incident reflects a growing unease within Scotland's political landscape, especially as many feel increasingly alienated by divisive tactics that do not address the real issues affecting local communities.

This political faction, which has styled itself as a necessitous change agent, has been accused of displaying a brand of messaging that only serves to further entrench divisions rather than bring about genuine solutions. Allegedly spending nearly £8,000 on this controversial advert, which reached up to half a million screens on social media, it seems that the aim is less about constructive dialogue and more about stirring tensions. Campaigning on the premise of catering solely to specific demographics undermines the unity Scotland requires now more than ever.

Responses from a range of political leaders have only cemented the disapproval surrounding this incident. An SNP spokesperson characterised the advertisement as “disgraceful,” insisting that Scotland’s diversity and inclusivity must remain paramount. Similarly, a candidate from the Scottish Liberal Democrats condemned the party's methods as a “foghorn” for division instead of tackling the legitimate concerns of voters suffering from economic decline and inadequate healthcare access.

This episode adds to a worrying trend of divisive practices from this dissenting faction. Previous accusations have suggested a culture within the party that tolerates racialist and sexist attitudes. A former candidate’s decision to withdraw their support illustrates the internal turmoil these methods have instigated, pointing to systemic issues that remain unaddressed. Even attempts by the party's leader to distance himself from unacceptable comments seem to fall short given the troubling narratives that persist.

Moreover, the broader societal concerns regarding racism and Islamophobia in Scottish politics cannot be overlooked. Sarwar's personal testimonials of discrimination, particularly regarding his leadership bid, have brought to light the obstacles faced by minority politicians. This highlights an ongoing need for all political parties to prioritize inclusivity over division, echoing discomfort with the narrative being fostered by certain parties.

The visibility of extremist groups that espouse far-right sentiments exacerbates these problems, targeting those who advocate for a united Scotland. While these groups are not directly affiliated with the other party, their presence complicates the political atmosphere and stirs increased mistrust within communities.

Polling data suggests that a significant number of voters may gravitate towards this dissenting faction in future elections, presenting a genuine challenge to both the SNP and Labour. Concerns voiced by Scotland’s First Minister indicate that public sentiment is shifting, and the implications for societal harmony are troubling as divisive rhetoric threatens to supersede the call for camaraderie.

In conclusion, the uproar surrounding this recent advertisement has opened up a crucial discussion about race and identity in Scotland. Leaders across the political spectrum have resoundingly denounced such divisive tactics, reminding us that unity should triumph over discord. As the political landscape shifts, it is essential that all parties prioritise constructive discourse to amplify the voices of all communities in Scotland, fostering an environment of respect and understanding rather than marginalisation.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/politics/reform-uk-accused-anas-sarwar-35265860> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/crgk44k4mzxo> - A Reform UK election candidate, Liam Booth-Isherwood, withdrew support for the party, citing 'widespread racism and sexism' within its ranks. He expressed moral concerns over the party's failure to address these issues, leading him to back the local Conservative candidate instead. Reform UK's chairman, Richard Tice, alleged that candidates were being offered inducements to criticize the party and endorse the Tories, suggesting 'dark forces at play by desperate Tories'.
3. <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/275199-anas-sarwar-says-lost-labour-leader-bid-over-racism-islamophobia> - Anas Sarwar, a Scottish Labour parliamentarian, claimed he lost his bid to lead the Labour Party in Scotland due to racist and Islamophobic questions about his Pakistani background, skin color, and religion. He recounted instances where a Labour councilor expressed reluctance to support him, stating Scotland wasn't ready for a 'brown, Muslim Paki', and another member couldn't back him after seeing a picture of his wife wearing a hijab.
4. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/ckmg1mldk0mo> - Conservative leader Rishi Sunak expressed being 'hurt' and 'angry' after a Reform UK canvasser used a racial slur to describe him. Secret recordings by Channel 4 revealed the canvasser, Andrew Parker, making derogatory remarks about Sunak, who is of Indian descent. Reform UK stated that individuals making 'unacceptable comments' would no longer be part of the campaign. Sunak emphasized the need to call out such behavior and questioned the party's culture.
5. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2024/06/25/reform-uk-video-showcases-black-candidates-to-refute-racism/> - In response to accusations of racism, Reform UK released a video highlighting its Black and minority ethnic candidates. The video featured 17 non-white candidates standing for election, including Ben Habib, the party's deputy leader, and Nagender Chindam, a businessman. Richard Tice, Reform UK's chairman, claimed that political opponents 'cannot deal' with the party's diversity and resorted to 'smears' as a result.
6. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/nigel-farage-andrew-parker-reform-uk-conservative-party-prime-minister-b2571434.html> - Nigel Farage, leader of Reform UK, addressed accusations of racism within the party, stating that 'the bad apples are gone' and would 'never have them back'. This followed the withdrawal of support for three candidates over racist remarks. Farage suggested that footage of a canvasser using a racial slur against Rishi Sunak was part of a 'smear campaign' against the party, emphasizing that such individuals were no longer part of Reform UK.
7. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/ckmg1mldk0mo> - Conservative leader Rishi Sunak expressed being 'hurt' and 'angry' after a Reform UK canvasser used a racial slur to describe him. Secret recordings by Channel 4 revealed the canvasser, Andrew Parker, making derogatory remarks about Sunak, who is of Indian descent. Reform UK stated that individuals making 'unacceptable comments' would no longer be part of the campaign. Sunak emphasized the need to call out such behavior and questioned the party's culture.