# SNP lodges complaint over 'race-baiting' ad targeting Anas Sarwar in tense Scottish by-election



The Scottish National Party (SNP) has filed a formal complaint against a contentious political advertisement from a rising challenger, which it claims engages in “race-baiting” against Anas Sarwar, the Scottish Labour leader. This controversy arises in the context of a by-election to fill the seat left vacant by the late Christina McKelvie, spotlighting the increasingly fraught political landscape in Scotland. Carol Beattie, SNP Chief Executive, has urged Meta, the parent company of Facebook and Instagram, to take down the ad that asserts Sarwar prioritises Pakistani communities, framing it as a divisive tactic that risks instigating racial resentment.

In her statement, Beattie decried the advertisement as detrimental to societal harmony, arguing that it portrays Sarwar's engagement with minority communities as a threat. She condemned the material as a clear instance of “identity-based fear mongering,” urging Meta to act decisively against a trend that feeds into the narrative of extremist polarization. Such concerns underscore a growing anxiety regarding the emergence of a fragmented political discourse in a Scotland already wrestling with complex issues of identity, race, and inclusion.

The criticism directed at the challenger resonates with the personal struggles of Sarwar himself, who has confronted racially charged hostility within his own party. In a striking admission from 2018, he relayed an instance during a Labour leadership election where a senior councillor dismissed his candidacy, asserting that “Scotland wouldn't vote for a brown Muslim Paki.” This shocking revelation triggered an internal investigation, highlighting the pressing need for political parties to tackle racism within their ranks. Sarwar’s encounters underscore the ongoing challenges regarding inclusivity in Scottish politics, as he advocates for confronting “everyday racism and Islamophobia” across all levels of society.

This charged political backdrop complicates the strategic positioning of the challenger as it increasingly aligns itself with anti-immigration sentiments. With its tactics coming under scrutiny, Sarwar has characterized these moves as attempts to delegitimize his identity and commitment to Scotland, referring to them as opportunistic efforts to capitalize on public anxieties for political leverage. While he remains steadfast in his dedication to building a fairer and more equitable society, the atmosphere is thick with tension, suggesting that voters may be wary of the divisive tactics employed by some parties.

Despite the backlash, the challenger seems unfazed by these accusations. Yet, there is no denying that its approach could alienate many voters, especially as they appear intent on manipulating existing societal divisions. Critics across the political spectrum, including voices from the Scottish Trade Union Congress (STUC), have denounced the advertisement as “repugnant,” calling for a united front against such underhanded tactics. This reflects an escalating concern regarding the rise of racialized political discourse, which threatens to fracture societal bonds.

As the situation unfolds, it serves as a crucial moment in Scotland’s political narrative, with the impending by-election set against a backdrop of deep-rooted issues concerning identity, representation, and the menace of racial intolerance. This environment stands as a stark reminder that the language employed in political campaigns can have significant repercussions for social cohesion—especially in a Scotland characterized by its diversity. With awareness heightened, both the SNP and Labour remain acutely cognizant that the narratives surrounding race and belonging will be instrumental in influencing voter sentiment and electoral outcomes.

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/politics/snp-complain-reforms-race-baiting-35284463> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-42862375> - In January 2018, Scottish Labour MSP Anas Sarwar reported that a senior Labour councillor told him, "Scotland wouldn't vote for a brown Muslim Paki," during the party's leadership election. The Labour Party initiated an investigation into these allegations, emphasizing a zero-tolerance approach to racism and bigotry. Sarwar highlighted the need to address "everyday racism and Islamophobia" within the party and Scottish society. The incident underscores ongoing challenges related to racial prejudice within political institutions in Scotland.
3. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-48103299> - Anas Sarwar criticized the Labour Party's internal complaints process after a councillor was cleared of racially abusing him. He was given only four days' notice of a hearing and was prevented from giving evidence due to procedural issues. Sarwar expressed feelings of being "upset, depressed and demoralised," questioning the fairness of the process and its suitability for addressing such serious allegations.
4. <https://news.sky.com/story/scottish-politician-anas-sarwar-warns-of-rising-islamophobia-in-uk-after-slur-11230568> - In January 2018, Anas Sarwar, a Scottish Labour politician, reported being racially abused by a fellow party member during his leadership campaign. The councillor allegedly referred to him as a "brown, Muslim P\*\*\*." Sarwar emphasized the rising issue of "everyday Islamophobia" in the UK and called for appropriate action from the party. The accused councillor, Davie McLachlan, was suspended pending an investigation, which he vehemently denied the allegations.
5. <https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/16068059.police-union-accuses-labour-msp-anas-sarwar-of-playing-the-race-card/> - In 2018, Anas Sarwar, a Glasgow Labour MSP, accused the Scottish Police Federation of "playing the race card" after he highlighted statistics showing ethnic minorities were disproportionately targeted in stop-and-search operations. Sarwar urged the Justice Secretary to ensure stop-and-search powers were used effectively and without prejudice. The police union responded by questioning the validity of the data and accusing Sarwar of making unfounded charges against officers.
6. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-south-scotland-47640236> - In 2019, a 72-year-old pensioner, Donald Brown, was fined £400 for sending racially offensive emails to Labour MSP Anas Sarwar. The emails included derogatory comments and suggested Sarwar "go back to Pakistan." Brown admitted to sending the emails and was ordered to pay the fine after pleading guilty. Sarwar had previously reported receiving similar racist messages, highlighting ongoing issues of racial prejudice faced by politicians.
7. <https://talkingupscotlandtwo.com/2025/02/18/as-labour-and-cons-fade-i-smell-danger-scots-immigration-and-reform-uk-what-can-we-do/> - In February 2025, discussions emerged about the potential impact of Reform UK in Scotland, particularly concerning immigration policies. The article speculated on the party's strategies to gain seats in the Scottish Parliament and the possible challenges posed to the Scottish National Party (SNP). It highlighted concerns about the influence of Reform UK on Scottish politics and the implications for immigration debates, emphasizing the need for vigilance and proactive measures to address these developments.