



Defence Committee

From the Chair:

Tan Dhesi MP

6 May 2025

Rt Hon. John Healey MP
Secretary of State for Defence
Ministry of Defence

By email only

Subject: Racial discrimination in the Armed Forces

Dear Secretary of State,

We have recently received accounts of racial discrimination experienced by personnel while serving in the Armed Forces.

These accounts describe concerning incidents of racist bullying and harassment, including physical abuse and the use of racial slurs against personnel from ethnic minority backgrounds. They also describe a culture in which racial biases disadvantage minority personnel, resulting in them being ostracised or passed over for promotion. Many of the authors report that when they raised complaints about their treatment these were not taken seriously or, even worse, led to them being victimised; some were subsequently vindicated by the findings of an Employment Tribunal, leading them to express a lack of confidence in the Service Complaints process. The Committee has chosen not to publish these submissions because of the sensitive personal information they contain, but you will be aware of cases which have been the subject of media reports.

The accounts shared with us raise serious questions about behaviour and culture in the Armed Forces, and about the ability of the Service Complaints process to satisfactorily address complaints of racial discrimination. Several of the individuals who wrote to us said they could not in good faith recommend the Armed Forces as a career to someone from an ethnic minority background. We know you will agree this is a concerning situation, and we would be grateful for a response to the following:

- What actions are the Government and the single services taking to assess the extent of racial discrimination in the Armed Forces?



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- What actions are being taken to address underlying issues of racial discrimination in the Armed Forces?
- What is your assessment of the adequacy of the Service Complaints process for dealing with complaints of racial discrimination?
- What data is collected on reports of, and Service Complaints related to, racial discrimination?

We would be grateful for a response by 25 June.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T Dhesi'.

Tan Dhesi MP