

03

Feb 2021

⚠ Lvl. 2

No state  
reply yet

United Kingdom

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Alert created on: 01 Feb 2021

## Journalist Nadine White Smearred by Minister for Equalities

SOURCE OF THREAT ▶ State

CATEGORY  ▶ Harassment and intimidation of journalists

### NO STATE REPLY YET

**PARTNER:** [Index](#), [Article 19](#), [EFJ/IFJ](#)

At the end of January 2021, Nadine White, a reporter for HuffPost UK, contacted the Minister for Equalities, Kemi Badenoch, to ask her to respond to claims that she had “refused to participate” in a cross-party video encouraging vaccine take-up across Black communities in the United Kingdom. White subsequently reiterated her request, but no reply was received. On 29 January, Badenoch posted an 8-part Twitter thread, which included screenshots of White’s e-mail enquiries to Badenoch’s office, accusing White and HuffPost UK of “looking to sow distrust by making up claims [that she] refused to take part in a video campaign”. She also accused White’s interest in why she didn’t participate in the video as being “creepy and bizarre.” She said White’s query was “[a] sad insight into how some journalists operate...”. Badenoch’s Twitter posts sparked a flood of abuse and threats against White.

On 30 January, White said she was “forced to switch [her] public profile to private in order to preserve [her] mental health”, after she had been receiving “nuisance calls” on her work phone, as well as abuse via e-mail and online. In response to Badenoch’s Twitter thread, HuffPost’s editor-in-chief, Jess Brammar, said it was “correct and standard practice for journalists to check facts and approach people in public office for comment”, and that HuffPost UK had not published the story without the response. HuffPost UK later filed a formal complaint to the Permanent Secretary for the Cabinet Office, Alex Chisholm, regarding Badenoch’s conduct.

### UPDATES

**NEW**

**03 Mar 2021:** The Cabinet Office has dismissed a formal complaint from the Huffington Post. In a letter to the Huffington Post, Cabinet Office permanent secretary Alex Chisholm wrote: “I note that the tweets were not issued from a government Twitter account but instead from a personal Twitter account”. “The minister is personally responsible for deciding how to act and conduct herself, and for justifying her own actions and conduct. As such, this is a matter on which the minister would be best placed to offer a response. I note

in addition the Prime Minister's press secretary has already provided comments on this matter."

➔ **BBC news article : "Kemi Badenoch Twitter complaint dismissed by government"**

#### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**



➔ **Article by the Guardian : "Minister under fire over tweets about journalist who sent her questions | Journalist safety"**

➔ **Twitter thread by Minister Badenoch**