



MAIMONIDES
INTERFAITH
FOUNDATION

ABOUT ROKHSANA

Rokhsana was appointed the Chief Executive of the Maimonides Interfaith Foundation in April 2013.

With over 20 years high-level experience in public policy, government relations, research, communications and corporate affairs, she has strong policy expertise in education, inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue, integration and cohesion, counter-terrorism, development issues, equalities and human rights.

Formerly, Rokhsana was the Executive Director of the Coexistence Trust, a charity established in 2005 to address the common threats of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. During her three year's at the Trust, she led a team of dedicated professionals tasked with developing emerging leaders from Muslim and Jewish communities in the UK. She successfully repositioned the organisation to become the leading Muslim and Jewish youth leadership organisation in the UK and a credible force in the interfaith sector.

Prior to her time at the Coexistence Trust, she was the founding director of The Change Institute a research, evaluation, organisational development and strategic communications consultancy specialising in emerging issues of race, faith and identity.

With over 20 years high-level experience in public policy, government relations, research, communications and corporate affairs, she is a specialist in race and diversity with strong policy expertise on development issues, faith, integration and cohesion, counter-terrorism and human rights.

A former political journalist and an expert communications professional, Rokhsana has strong project management skills and a demonstrable career history of managing and

leading both small and large project teams on a range of complex projects, which have included budgetary responsibilities and the demonstration of commercial nuance and value for money principals. She has strong links with public policy makers, officials and politicians; alongside public authority representatives, academics, journalists, non-governmental organisations and governmental institutions at local, national, and international levels.

She has extensive experience of undertaking large and mid-scale research, policy development and marketing and communications campaigns, in particular those aimed at accessing and creating dialogue with 'hard to reach' groups. She has a strong understanding of community needs and dynamics across the full range of public policy issues and a strategic and creative approach to working with influencers and gatekeepers across a spectrum of stakeholder audiences. She has spent her professional career advising government and organisations on messaging and communication with ethnic minority populations both across the board and in recent years specifically in relation to working with Muslim communities.

She led the Change Institute's Strategic Communications and Public Affairs practice, having successfully achieved the practice's appointment to the UK government's Central Office for Information (COI) 'Cultural Diversity' Framework, one of seven agencies tasked with designing and delivering wide-ranging Government marketing and communication campaigns to Black and Minority ethnic communities in the UK. Specialising in social marketing, she is adept in working with the full range of marketing and communicating techniques, with demonstrable experience of applying innovative approaches across a diverse range of marketing and communication challenges.

Additionally, she led the Institute's 'Muslim Communities Research Unit', conducting qualitative and quantitative research on a diverse range of subjects. These included a major pan-European research study on '*Violent radicalisation underpinned by an abusive interpretation of Islam*' (2008) for the then DG Justice Freedom and Security of the European Commission (now DG Home Affairs). As the project Director she led a pan-European team from four member States, including the UK, France, Germany and Denmark. It formed part of the Commission's strategy for combating terrorism in the Union, and focused on the beliefs, narratives and ideologies of violent radicals and how

these impact on Muslim communities across Europe. It included research and analysis of the content and imagery of terrorist rhetoric and propaganda on the web, hate speech, conspiracy theories, and the interpretations of EU policies and those of Member States and the EU's international partners to improve understanding of how people, in different stages of the radicalisation process, embrace these ideas and make them their own.

She also led an EC commissioned research study titled *'Best Practice Cooperation in Countering Violent Radicalisation between civil society and authorities'* (2008). More recently, she led the *'European Network of Experts on Radicalisation'* (ENER), an initiative sponsored by DG Home Affairs. ENER is a multi-disciplinary network of leading European centers' and experts focused on the issue of violent radicalisation. Its work contributed to deepening the Commission's understanding of violent radicalisation processes, how to better address these issues and strengthen the preventative strand of the European Commission's counter-terrorism policy. As ENER Director, Rokhsana's role included liaison with twenty international renowned experts, organising high level seminars targeted at policy practitioners from across the EU and the international field, providing analysis and strategic policy advice on a range of related issues including the role between far right and violent jihadi movements; radicalisation and women; evaluation and assessment frameworks and addressing grievances.

She was also Project Director for the *'Understanding Muslim Ethnic Communities'* research study, commissioned by the UK government's Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG), to help them understand how to improve their engagement with, and inclusion of, all the diverse Muslim Communities in England. The aim of the research was to identify the key characteristics of 13 'priority' Muslim communities in order to guide CLG's delivery of Prevent projects within England and also to inform its international engagement programme.

As an advocate of community engagement, Rokhsana has been involved in a number of Muslim community facing initiatives including The City Circle and Alif-Aleph UK, and was the Chair of Trustees of a UK based charity called Uniting Britain Trust. She was a member of the UK government's Department of Work and Pensions Ethnic Minority in Employment advisory group and the CLG's National Muslim Women's Advisory Group.

She has been involved with the International Institute of Strategic Studies, as well as contributing to policy thinking on US and the Islamic World through the leading American think tank, The Brookings Institution.

In June 2009, Rokhsana was honoured with the Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in the Queen's Birthday Honours list for services to Black and Minority Communities in the UK.