

# Is Philip Davies fit to be an MP?

 [theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2017/feb/02/is-philip-davies-fit-to-be-an-mp](https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2017/feb/02/is-philip-davies-fit-to-be-an-mp)



 Philip Davies: has sought to derail numerous bills. Photograph: Mark Hakansson

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With his serial opposition to measures tackling domestic and sexual violence, the Tory MP looks less like a politician and more like an internet troll

The Conservative MP Philip Davies has once again used his position in the House of Commons to attempt to undermine a bill relating to domestic and sexual violence.

Davies objected to Conservative MP Nusrat Ghani's bill, which sought to end the use of the term "honour crime" in official government publications. The bill also argued for the extension of extraterritorial jurisdiction in some instances of domestic violence crimes committed against UK citizens, such as the recent Seeta Kaur case.

Speaking against the bill, Davies said: "It seems that I am the only one in this House at the moment who equally opposes honour-based violence against men, too." Yet in her speech, Ghani had specifically referred to male victims, saying: "Language matters. The use of the term 'honour' to describe a violent criminal act committed against a man, but more often a woman, can only be explained as a means of self-justification for the perpetrator. It diminishes the victim and provides a convenient excuse for what in our society we should more accurately call simply: murder, rape, abuse or enslavement."



📷 Nusrat Ghani, whose bill seeks to end the use of the term 'honour crime'. Photograph: Images Ltd/Rex/Shutterstock

It was not the first time Davies has intervened in parliamentary proceedings with the clear purpose of derailing measures intended to tackle violence against women and girls. In December, he filibustered for more than an hour in an attempt to prevent the passage of a bill calling for ratification of the Istanbul Convention, which has been described as a "gold standard" for tackling violence against women. Just last week, he also spent more than an hour filibustering a bill from MP Caroline Lucas which sought to make sex and relationships education compulsory, so she was unable to finish her opening speech or proceed to a vote.

What is most concerning about this elected MP's behaviour is how closely it mimics that of misogynistic online trolls. Like them, Davies is not interested in debate. Instead of joining a conversation and voicing his view, he would prefer to prevent the discussion from taking place at all. He made that clear when

filibustering another bill, which would have seen children given first aid training in schools, saying: “Why on earth would I allow a bill the principle of which I don’t like a second reading?” He also mimics online trolls in his use of questionable facts and statistics.

Today Davies called for the word “women” to be removed from the women and equalities committee. He has previously described feminists as “zealots”, voted against equalities legislation, argued against equality targets in the workplace and once tabled a private member’s bill that would have repealed the Sex Discrimination Act 2002. Last year, he spoke at a conference organised by the Justice for Men and Boys party, which is known for presenting petty “whining feminist” certificates to women’s rights advocates, and promoting inflammatory, misogynistic articles on its website such as one entitled “13 reasons women lie about being raped”.

Like many misogynistic so-called “men’s rights activists”, Davies does a disservice to genuine concerns about issues that have an impact on men. While the title of Ghani’s 10-minute rule bill reflected the highly gendered nature of the crimes in question by referring specifically to violence against women, she also made it clear in response to questions on Twitter that the proposed legislation would protect male victims. Davies could have established this with a simple question, but he seems far more interested in preventing support for women than actually advocating for men.

When complaining that he believes men are treated unfavourably by the justice system, Davies explicitly argued that more women should be sent to prison, rather than fewer men incarcerated. When asked if he has ever considered introducing his own bill to address the men’s issues he claims to be so concerned with, one interviewer described him as seeming to “run out of words”.

By his behaviour in the House of Commons, and by joining the women and equalities committee, a body whose very existence he has staunchly argued against, Davies follows Donald Trump in edging dangerously close to bringing the tactics of trolling and online abuse into national government. A man who behaves in this manner should not be sitting on a committee intended to present important evidence and advice to the government on matters relating to discrimination and inequality.

In 2017, women attempting to tackle sexual and domestic violence still face dismissal, derailing, disruption and online abuse. They should not be confronted by similar pathetic behaviour in the House of Commons. Our elected representatives are bound to represent the best interests of all their constituents in parliament. But here is a man who has also argued against allowing a youth organisation to use the House of Commons for a debate in case it might later allow Muslim organisations the same privilege; who has bombarded the EHRC with questions such as: “Why it is so offensive to black up your face?”; and who suggested that disabled workers should be able to offer to work for less than minimum wage.

Beyond his position on any committee, perhaps we should be questioning whether Philip Davies is fit to be a parliamentary representative at all?

This article was modified on 2 February 2017 to clarify Philip Davies’s comments about disabled workers and pay.