

Stand for Peace

counter-extremism | social cohesion | counter-terrorism

THE INTERFAITH INDUSTRY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“Over the next decade, religious extremists will, undoubtedly, continue to foster violence and hatred in Britain. It is alarming, then, that the proposed solution to such intolerance and bloodshed should be delegated to taxpayer-funded interfaith networks partly governed by the extremists themselves.”

➔ **Interfaith Extremism**

Interfaith dialogue initiatives have been extensively infiltrated and exploited by extreme Islamist groups aligned with Jamaat-e-Islami and the Muslim Brotherhood. The former head of the MI6, Sir Richard Dearlove, has described the Muslim Brotherhood as being "at heart, a terrorist organisation". A number of Jamaat-e-Islami officials in the UK, meanwhile, have been convicted in Bangladesh for their involvement in acts of genocide during the 1971 Independence War. Although Jamaat-e-Islami enjoys negligible support in Bangladesh, it has dominated Muslim representation within British interfaith activities. Consequently, moderate Muslims have been left without a voice. Interfaith provides extremist groups with access to politicians and policy makers.

➔ **Interfaith Exploited**

Taxpayer-funded interfaith groups willingly provide extreme Islamists with a platform. Senior interfaith officials include Manazir Ahsan, who coordinated the riots against Salman Rushdie and directs the Islamic Foundation, a Taliban-linked publisher of radical Islamist tracts in the UK. Groups such as the Joseph Interfaith Foundation work closely with extremist organisations, one of whose officials was a signatory to the Istanbul Declaration, a document that advocated attacks against British troops and Jewish communities. Interfaith umbrella groups include members such as the Al-Muntada Al-Islami Trust, a Wahhabi charity accused by Nigerian media of funding Al Qaeda; Engage, an Islamist lobby group which harangues Muslim anti-Islamist activists; and the Islamic Forum of Europe, a Jamaat-e-Islami lobby group accused by former Labour Minister Jim Fitzpatrick of "infiltrating the Labour Party".

➔ **Interfaith Cartel**

Interfaith groups and government officials have encouraged discrimination against smaller faith organisations, including Ahmaddiya groups, in order to placate the larger faith groups. Interfaith advocates who dissent from the official interfaith line have suffered harassment.

➔ **Interfaith Funding**

Extremist groups with links to terrorism and support for Holocaust denial receive public and charitable funding for interfaith initiatives. Hundreds of thousands of pounds of taxpayers' money has been given to interfaith umbrella groups, despite the presence of organisations and officials which promote extremist agenda.

➔ **Interfaith Legitimacy**

Soft Islamism has embraced interfaith dialogue because it affords extremist groups moral legitimacy, access to political influence and public funds. Other interfaith leaders, meanwhile, tolerate fundamentalists in order to preserve the interfaith ideal.

“Of course, as Muslims, we believe that this co-existence cannot take place unless they are living under the umbrella of al-Islam, under the system of al-Islam. But brother Jamil and brothers, we have to differentiate between a situation of a necessity that we are dealing with and the ultimate aim in an ideal situation. Now we are talking about minorities living in the West so we have to provide them with workable solutions in the short run. And as we said, these visions and strategies are meant to be for a short run, means within fifty years, something like this. It is not the far ultimate aim of Muslims because the far ultimate aim for Muslims is to have Islam governing the whole world, Islamisation of the whole globe. This is the ultimate aim of any Muslim and of all communities, Muslim communities. But we are not talking about that at the moment, we are talking about the immediate goals. So, in terms of immediate goals we need this peaceful co-existence and they claim that they are promoting it and we need to take it from there.”

- Haitham Al-Haddad

Interfaith Extremists

In 2005, Mohammed Ali Harrath, a leading figure within the British Muslim community and CEO of the Islam Channel,¹ organised the first annual Global Peace and Unity event in London. Harrath claims the exhibitions are designed to “promote dialogue, exchange ideas and information, and work towards dispelling misunderstandings surrounding the multiculturalism and co-existence of faiths.”²

Tens of thousands attended these conferences, journalists applauded the initiative and cabinet ministers, political commentators and other policy makers have addressed its crowds.

In 2010, however, The Daily Telegraph reported that at the conferences, “items glorifying terrorism were on open sale ... Also available were ‘*shahada* headbands’ as worn by many Palestinian suicide bombers... The headbands contain the personal testimony of the suicide bombers.”³

Speakers at the conferences have included Yusuf Estes, who advises husbands to beat their wives⁴ and advocates killing homosexuals;⁵ Sheikh Muhammad Alshareef, who calls upon Muslims to despise Jews, who he claims are “cursed”;⁶ and Mohammed Ijaz ul Haq, who has claimed suicide bombings are an appropriate response to the decision to award Salman Rushdie a knighthood.⁷

Global Peace and Unity pledges a dedication to “coexistence”. In truth, however, the organisers are representatives of the Muslim Brotherhood (and its sub-continental like-minded cousin, Jamaat-e-Islami), a global radical Islamist group whose leaders promote terrorism and incite hatred against Jews, women, homosexuals and other minorities. In 2009, the Brotherhood’s spiritual leader, Sheikh Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, thanked Hitler for having “managed to put Jews in their place . . . Allah willing, the next time will be at the hand of the (Muslim) believers.”⁸

The former head of the MI6, Sir Richard Dearlove has described the Muslim Brotherhood as being, “at heart, a terrorist organisation.”⁹

This series of conferences is not a lonely example of extremist groups exploiting benevolent causes; it is just the tip of the iceberg.

The most serious case of such exploitation can be found within Britain’s interfaith movement, whose networks and officials have allowed the misuse of inter-religious dialogue to sanitise

¹ <http://iengage.org.uk/about-us/engage-team>

² <http://www.theglobalunity.com/chairman/>

³ <http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/andrewgilligan/100060960/minister-spoke-at-event-with-terrorist-accessories-on-sale/>

⁴ <http://carnageandculture.blogspot.co.uk/2006/10/asra-q-nomani-clothes-arent-issue.html>

⁵ <http://www.islamtomorrow.com/gays/fatwa.htm>

⁶ <http://sunnahonline.com/ilm/jihaad/0006.htm>

⁷ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2007/jun/18/books.religion>

⁸ Time to Wise Up to the Muslim Brotherhood, John Ware, Standpoint Magazine, July/August 2013

⁹ Britain's former spy chief: MI6 kept secrets from Israel Hamas Iran's puppet, Martin Bright, Jewish Chronicle, 31 March 2011.

extremist groups. Interfaith dialogue has deceptively legitimised these fundamentalists as fit and proper representatives of Britain's Muslim community, while genuine moderates are left without a voice.

A public declaration of support for interfaith also helps bring about the possibility of public funds. In September 2013, for instance, national media reported that non-Muslim staff were "forced out" of Al Madinah,¹⁰ a state-funded school in Derby accused of promoting Islamist ideals. The school had initially received £1.4 million of taxpayers' funds after marketing itself as an 'interfaith' establishment.

Two Islamist networks in particular, the Muslim Brotherhood and Jamaat-e-Islami, have embedded their officials and front-groups within Britain's interfaith network.

The Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) is a leading interfaith actor. British representatives of both Jamaat-e-Islami and the Muslim Brotherhood control the MCB leadership. Its leading role in the interfaith movement demonstrates the extent to which Islamist movements have usurped any moderate Muslim support for interfaith dialogue.

The MCB was founded in 1998,¹¹ and has received several hundred thousand pounds of taxpayers' money¹², despite its links with extremists. Cabinet ministers have condemned the MCB for its periodic boycott of Holocaust Memorial Day.¹³ In 2001, the MCB also expressed its "concern" about commemorating the "alleged Armenian genocide as well as the so-called gay genocide".¹⁴

In 2009, the British Government cut ties with the Muslim Council of Britain after Daud Abdullah, the Deputy-Secretary General, became a signatory to the Istanbul Declaration, which called for attacks on British troops and Jewish communities.¹⁵ Daud Abdullah has since signed a letter against the War Crimes tribunal in Bangladesh, in which he defended one of the accused war criminals, Ghulam Azam, as an "Islamic personality".¹⁶

A report published by the Department for Communities and Local Government explicitly connects the Muslim Council of Britain with the violent Bangladeshi group Jamaat-e-Islami.¹⁷ The report stated that Jamaat, "...helped to create and subsequently dominate the leadership of the MCB," and that the Pakistani and Bangladeshi wings of Jamaat-e-Islami are, "vying for the leadership of the MCB."

Despite the clear links between the MCB and violent extremists abroad, the taxpayer has given £850,000 to the MCB for counter-extremism and interfaith initiatives.¹⁸

¹⁰ Teacher 'forced out of school' for failure to wear Muslim hijab, Graeme Paton, The Telegraph, 24 September 2013

¹¹ <http://www.mcb.org.uk/media/archive/news010398.html>

¹² 'Council Spending Uncovered II: No.5: THE PREVENT STRATEGY', Taxpayers' Alliance, September 2009

¹³ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/4582736.stm> See also: <http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2009/jan/29/holocaust-day-mcb>

¹⁴ <http://web.archive.org/web/20010309212038/http://www.mcb.org.uk/news260101.html>

¹⁵ British Muslim leader urged to quit over Gaza, Jamie Doward, The Guardian, 8 March 2009.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/mar/08/daud-abdullah-gaza-middle-east>

¹⁶ <http://bangladeshcrisisgroup.com/new/?p=42>

¹⁷ <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20120919132719/http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/1170952.pdf>

¹⁸ <http://www.taxpayersalliance.com/waste/2009/09/council-spending-uncovered-ii-no-5-preventing-violent-extremism-grants.html>

One affiliate of the Muslim Council of Britain is Da'watul Islam,¹⁹ which was set up by the wanted Bangladeshi war criminal Chowdhury Mueen-Uddin,²⁰ a leader of the Al-Badr killing squad. In November 2013, the Bangladeshi War Crimes Tribunal sentenced Mueen-Uddin to death for his role in the abduction and murder of 18 journalists and intellectuals.²¹

Chowdhury Mueen-Uddin is a regular speaker at interfaith events.²² He was even chairman of the Multi-Faith Group for Healthcare Chaplaincy. The group he established, Da'watul Islam, lists Jamaat-e-Islami's official website as a "useful site" under 'Islamic movements' on an archived version of its website.²³

Muhammad Abdul Bari -- a former Secretary General of MCB,²⁴ current MCB National Council Member²⁵ and chairman of East London Mosque²⁶ -- is a former president of the extremist Islamic Forum of Europe.²⁷ In 2006, while Secretary General of the MCB, he offered the East London Mosque as a platform to Delwar Hossain Sayeedi,²⁸ the Jamaat-e-Islami vice-president who has since also been sentenced to death in Bangladesh for his involvement in acts of genocide during the 1971 War of Independence.²⁹ Muhammad Abdul Bari has also defended the East London Mosque's decision to host an event with Anwar Al-Awlaki, the late Al Qaeda leader.³⁰

One of the founding organisations of the MCB³¹ (and current affiliate³²) is the Islamic Foundation, of which the MCB's Secretary General Farooq Murad is also a trustee.³³ The Islamic Foundation maintains numerous links to Jamaat-e-Islami, and yet its officials are also leading officials within larger interfaith umbrella groups, such as the Inter Faith Network. The Foundation's current chairman, Khurshid Ahmad,³⁴ is also the vice-president of Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan.³⁵

The MCB's website has described Jamaat-e-Islami as a, "...perfectly legitimate and democratic Islamic party" and its founder, the ideologue Abul 'Ala Maududi, as an "important Islamic thinker."³⁶ In 2009, a Home Office report acknowledged the influence of Maududi on Islamic radicals.³⁷ A year

¹⁹ <http://web.archive.org/web/20071215103546/http://www.dawatul-islam.org.uk/index.php?id=37>

²⁰ <http://www.genocidebangladesh.org/?p=296>

²¹ UK Muslim leader Chowdhury Mueen Uddin sentenced to death in Bangladesh, Syed Tashfin Chowdhury, The Independent, 3 November 2013

²² <http://www.christianmuslimforum.org/index.php/news/123-reflections-on-inter-faith-week>

²³ <http://web.archive.org/web/20011221221330/http://www.dawatul-islam.org/links.html>

²⁴ <http://www.mcb.org.uk/uploads/AGM%20REPORT%2007-08.PDF>

²⁵ http://www.mcb.org.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=82&Itemid=76

²⁶ <http://www.eastlondonmosque.org.uk/content/management>

²⁷ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/labour/7333487/Inextricably-linked-to-controversial-mosque-the-secret-world-of-IFE.html> See also: <http://www.islamicforumeurope.com/live/ife.php?doc=articleitem&itemId=312>

²⁸ Benedict Brogan, Extremist linked cleric given green light to enter Britain, 13 July 2006.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-395585/Extremist-linked-cleric-given-green-light-enter-Britain.html>

²⁹ Bangladesh war crimes trial: Key defendants, 17 July 2013.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-20970123>

³⁰ <http://hurryupharry.org/2010/10/13/muhammad-abdul-bari-and-awlaki/>

³¹ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/panorama/4171950.stm>

³² http://www.mcb.org.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=993&Itemid=18

³³ <http://www.islamic-foundation.org.uk/User/BoardofTrustees.aspx>

³⁴ *ibid.*

³⁵ <http://web.archive.org/web/20090429212635/http://www.jamaat.org/leadership/pka.html>

³⁶ http://mcb.org.uk/library/article_21-08-05.php

³⁷ Pursue Prevent Protect Prepare: The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering International Terrorism, March 2009, p 24. <http://www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/cm75/7547/7547.pdf>

later, Bangladesh banned Maududi's books. A religious foundation funded by the Bangladeshi Government told the BBC that Maududi's writings encouraged "militancy and terrorism", and that Maududi's ideological aim was to seize power in the name of Islam.³⁸

In August 2004, ninety-three Muslim Brotherhood and Jamaat-e-Islami leaders signed a declaration supporting uprisings against coalition troops in Iraq – referring to them as the "filth of occupation". Khurshid Ahmed was one of the signatories,³⁹ along with Hamas and Hezbollah leaders. The Muslim Brotherhood's spiritual leader Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, who is banned from Britain, was a co-signatory.⁴⁰

Muslim Brotherhood representatives within the MCB have included:⁴¹

Omer El-Hamdoon, the Assistant Secretary General of the MCB,⁴² is also the President of the Muslim Association of Britain,⁴³ which, in December 2010, was identified in the House of Commons as a Muslim Brotherhood front.⁴⁴

Dr Kamal El-Helbawy, who "...helped create the MCB",⁴⁵ is described by an official Muslim Brotherhood website as, "...a prominent Muslim Brotherhood figure,"⁴⁶ the "Europe-based Muslim Brotherhood leader"⁴⁷ and "...founding president of the Muslim Association of Britain and former spokesman for the Brotherhood in Europe."⁴⁸

Ahmed Al-Rawi, former president of both MAB and the Federation of Islamic Organisations in Europe⁴⁹ – two prominent Brotherhood organisations – was, in 2004, also a signatory to the document which expressed support for terrorism in Iraq and Israel.⁵⁰

Writing in the *Wall Street Journal*, the journalist Fiammetta Venner noted:

"When it comes to Muslim affairs, British authorities tend to turn to Ahmed Al-Rawi, one of the people in charge of the Federation of Islamic Organisations in Europe, the structure representing the Muslim Brotherhood in Europe. He has lived in Britain since 1975, when Saddam Hussein's regime sentenced him to death. That doesn't stop him from approving the Jihad against the Anglo-American forces in Iraq. In August 2004, the cleric issued an opinion authorizing any Iraqi or Palestinian to kill Britons, Americans or Israelis. In front of the bewildered press, which had always praised him and looked at him as the incarnation of liberal Islam, he justified himself by comparing British troops' occupation of Iraq to the 1940 Nazi invasion of

³⁸ Bangladesh bans books written by radical Islamic author, Anbarasan Ethirajan, BBC News, 16 July 2010

³⁹ British Islam colleges 'link to terrorism', Sean O'Neill, The Times, 29 July 2004.

⁴⁰ British Muslim says troops are fair target, Nicholas Rufford and Abul Taher, Sunday Times, 31 October 2004.

⁴¹ <http://www.mcb.org.uk/uploads/AGM%20REPORT%2007-08.PDF>

⁴² http://www.mcb.org.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=81&Itemid=76

⁴³ <http://www.mabonline.net/meet-the-team-267.html>

⁴⁴ <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm101122/text/101122w0003.htm#10112234000037>

⁴⁵ <https://www.csidonline.org/annual-conference/10th-annual-conference/speakers/500>

⁴⁶ <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=28442>

⁴⁷ <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=4646>

⁴⁸ <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=696>

⁴⁹ <http://globalmbreport.com/?p=707>

⁵⁰ Al-Quds Al-Arabi (London), 8/23/2004 – pg 4

Western Europe.”⁵¹

The Quilliam Foundation, a Muslim counter-extremist think tank, has written of Kamal El-Helbawy that,

“For many years he has presented himself to western audiences as a moderate and as a counter-extremism expert, setting up a ‘Centre for the Study of Terrorism’, taking part in interfaith events and even convincing London’s Metropolitan Police to help him and other Muslim Brotherhood supporters take control of Finsbury Park Mosque after the removal of Abu Hamza.”⁵²

In 2009, during an appearance on BBC Arabic, Kamal El-Helbawy justified the murder of Israeli children on the grounds that they were “future soldiers”.⁵³ In 2011, Kamal El-Helbawy praised Bin Laden as “a great mujahid” and called on God to “treat him generously.”⁵⁴

The MCB is, in fact, an official supporter of the Al-Quds March through London,⁵⁵ the annual event launched by the late Ayatollah Khomeini, in which crowds chant support for the Iranian regime and the Lebanese terrorist group Hezbollah.⁵⁶

Despite these alarming connections and activities, the MCB is a leading interfaith actor. Since the British Government cut its ties with the MCB in 2009, a variety of interfaith initiatives have afforded MCB officials access to Government through groups such as the Inter Faith Network for the United Kingdom, of which the MCB is a prominent member body.

Affiliates of the MCB have also sought to use interfaith to distract from their own fundamentalism. The Secretary-General of the Islamic Sharia Council, Suhaib Hasan, was a signatory to a letter calling for better interfaith relations between the Muslim and Jewish communities. Suhaib Hasan, however, has also said that in his ideal *sharia* Britain, adulterers would be stoned and thieves would have their hands amputated.⁵⁷

It is not just Sunni Islamists who have sought to exploit interfaith dialogue; extremist groups associated with the Iranian regime have done the same. International Islamic Link, for instance, is a charity based in London which has received interfaith funds from local Government. The charity is part of the Babul Murad Centre – an institution strongly supportive of the Iranian regime. Until recently, International Islamic Link described itself as the “office of his eminence Hazarat Ayatollah Nasir Makarem Shirazi.”⁵⁸

Hazarat Ayatollah Nasir Makarem Shirazi, also known as Ayatollah Shirazi, is one of the most important religious figures in Iran. He is also a prominent Holocaust denier. After the 1979 revolution, Ayatollah Shirazi served in the Assembly of Experts, which drafted Iran's Islamist

⁵¹ Dangerous Liaisons, Fiammetta Venner, Wall Street Journal, 15 July 2005.

⁵² <http://www.quilliamfoundation.org/press-releases/senior-british-islamist-praises-osama-bin-laden/>

⁵³ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/4209135/BBC-criticised-over-broadcast-by-19-million-Arabic-TV-station.html>

⁵⁴ <http://www.quilliamfoundation.org/press-releases/senior-british-islamist-praises-osama-bin-laden/>

⁵⁵ <http://www.ihr.org.uk/attachments/article/10581/Al%20Quds%20Day-2013.pdf>

⁵⁶ <http://blog.thecst.org.uk/?p=4473>

⁵⁷ ‘We want to offer sharia law to Britain’, Clare Dwyer Hogg and Jonathan Wynne-Jones, The Daily Telegraph, 2 January 2008

⁵⁸ <http://hurrypharry.org/2012/07/23/the-extremist-iranian-cleric-and-the-british-charity/>

constitution. Since then, although he has refused to serve in any government post, he is considered an important component of the clerical regime. Recently, Aytollah Shirazi has issued a fatwa for the murder of Iranian pro-democracy activist Roozbeh Farahanipour.⁵⁹ He also advocates death by stoning for adulterers and the killing of homosexuals. Ayatollah Shirazi further states that, “the Holocaust is nothing but superstition, and Zionists say that people of the world should be forced to accept this.” His website is replete with descriptions of “sly, deceitful Jews”, “Jewish profiteering” and claims of “Jewish plans to exploit the common people.”⁶⁰

Despite these clear expressions of vicious intolerance, in 2009, as part of the Council's 'Building Stronger Communities' Strategy, Ayatollah Shirazi's charity, International Islamic Link, was given £15,000 by Brent Council, a local government body in London, to promote “religious tolerance.”⁶¹

Even extremist Salafi groups such as the Al-Muntada Al-Islami Trust purport to promote “interfaith dialogue”.⁶² Nigerian newspapers have accused Al Muntada of promoting Wahhabism in Nigeria and funding Boko Haram, a terrorist group affiliated with Al Qaeda.⁶³ Speakers at Al Muntada events have included Ali Al-Timimi,⁶⁴ who was later convicted of recruiting fighters for the Taliban after the September 11 attacks and sentenced to life in prison in 2005.⁶⁵ Furthermore, during a sermon at the Al-Muntada Al-Islamic centre in London, the hate preacher Haitham Al-Haddad described Jews as “eternal enemies”, quoted from the infamous anti-Semitic forgery ‘The Protocols of the Elders of Zion’ and said, “We must reflect on the reality of the conflict between us and the Jews, the enemies of God, and the descendants of apes and pigs.”⁶⁶ Every year, Al-Muntada organises an event named ‘Month of Mercy’, which features some of the most extreme Islamist preachers from across Europe and Saudi Arabia.⁶⁷

The East London Mosque, a key institution of Jamaat-e-Islami in the UK,⁶⁸ is involved with a considerable number of interfaith initiatives, such as the Tower Hamlets Inter Faith Forum and The East London Communities Organisation. The East London Mosque is a notorious promoter of pro-terror and anti-Semitic hate-preachers.

In June 2013, Assim Al-Hakeem, a hate preacher who has been banned from Sheffield Hallam University, gave the Friday sermon at the East London Mosque.⁶⁹ Al-Hakeem teaches that apostates must be killed.⁷⁰ He advocates the execution of Christians and Jews who are found to be “talking against Mohammed”.⁷¹ In May, the Mosque was due to host Abu Abdissalam,⁷² a hate preacher who discourages Muslims from working with the police, who he claims are engaged in a “war against

⁵⁹ <http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/3581/charity-commission-international-islamic-link>

⁶⁰ <http://makarem.ir/index.aspx?lid=1>

⁶¹ <http://www.azarmehr.info/2012/07/so-what-if-people-dont-eat-chicken.html>

⁶² <http://www.almuntada.co.uk/about-us/chairmans-message/>

⁶³ <http://tribune.com.ng/index.php/lead-stories/47305-cleric-unmasks-boko-haram-sponsors-names-prominent-nigerians-top-govt-functionaries-forwards-list-to-senate-president-supports-claims-with-video-clips-mark-orders-investigation-uk-charity-group-accused-of-funding-boko-haram>

⁶⁴ <http://www.jimas.org/pposter.jpg>

⁶⁵ <http://www.investigativeproject.org/profile/104>

⁶⁶ <http://www.alminbar.net/alkhutab/khutbaa.asp?mediaURL=4359>

⁶⁷ <http://standforpeace.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Month-of-mercy-briefing-updated.pdf>

⁶⁸ <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20120919132719/http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/1170952.pdf>

⁶⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e37zprWBi6I>

⁷⁰ <http://www.assimalhakeem.net/node/5858>

⁷¹ <http://www.assimalhakeem.net/node/2008>

⁷² <http://hurryupharry.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/elm-abdissalam-5-13.jpg>

Islam". He is also a noted supporter of the jihadist Ali al Timimi, who has also advocated the decapitation of Shia Muslims.⁷³

In March, the East London Mosque was due to host Khalid Al-Fikri,⁷⁴ an outspoken supporter of terrorist organisations and who incites hatred towards Shia Muslims, saying: "Shia are one of the worst and greatest enemies against our *ummah* nowadays."⁷⁵

The mosque frequently offers platforms to extremists who preach hatred and support the execution of homosexuals.⁷⁶ Despite the East London Mosque's evident tolerance for speakers hateful of other sects and faiths, interfaith group and faith leaders, nevertheless, continue to embrace the Mosque's officials and affiliates as suitable partners for dialogue.

In response to appeals by Jewish and Muslim activists for the Jewish leadership to cease collaboration with extremist groups, interfaith advocates such as Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg have defended their work with extremist institutions such as the East London Mosque by claiming: "We have to take risks to engage with each other. The Jewish community will be far weaker if we all shelter within a comfort zone labelled 'They all hate us out there'."⁷⁷

Some interfaith leaders, then, appear to be completely aware of the iniquitous ideologies with which they are "engaging". Consequently, however, these officials legitimise extreme Islamists as representatives of the British Muslim community, and simultaneously silence those for whom Islam is a private faith and not a totalitarian political ideology.

⁷³ <http://hurryupharry.org/2013/07/11/the-guardian-enablers-and-defenders-of-hatred/>

⁷⁴ <http://hurryupharry.org/2013/02/25/khalid-al-fikri-and-the-east-london-mosque/>

⁷⁵ *ibid.*

⁷⁶ <http://hurryupharry.org/2013/01/22/more-on-the-east-london-mosque-and-homophobia/>

⁷⁷ Rabbi 'in pain' over London Citizens link, Martin Bright, Jewish Chronicle, 2 June 2011

Interfaith Exploited

Inter Faith Network for the United Kingdom

In Britain, the largest umbrella group for interfaith initiatives is the *Inter Faith Network for the United Kingdom* (IFN). Founded in 1987, the IFN's members include "representative bodies from the Baha'i; Buddhist; Christian; Hindu; Jain; Jewish; Muslim; Sikh; and Zoroastrian communities; national and local inter faith bodies; and academic institutions and educational bodies concerned with inter faith issues."⁷⁸

The IFN has received millions of pounds of taxpayers' funds. 80% of the IFN's budget is taxpayers' money.⁷⁹ In 2011 alone, the Department for Communities and Local Government granted £373,990 to the IFN.⁸⁰ The IFN claims it works to "promote understanding and respect" between different faith groups.⁸¹

In July 2013, however, a delegate to an IFN conference in Birmingham told the other delegates that he had heard a senior IFN official claim that "Jews were a disease".⁸² The delegate also denounced a number of IFN member bodies for their collaboration with signatories to the Istanbul Declaration, a document calling for attacks on British troops and Jewish communities.⁸³

The IFN's stated aims, however, are clearly at odds with the views held by some of its membership.

From 2011-12, the IFN's co-chairman was Dr Manazir Ahsan (although his term expired in July 2013, he remains a member of the IFN's executive committee), a leading British Islamist who helped to coordinate the riots in the UK against Salman Rushdie over his book, *The Satanic Verses*. Manazir Ahsan was a founder of the UK Action Committee on Islamic Affairs, which organised book burnings and protests, and called for the book to be banned and Rushdie to be prosecuted.⁸⁴

Iqbal Sacranie, another representative of the United Kingdom Action Committee on Islamic Affairs and a colleague of Ahsan, declared, "Death, perhaps, is a bit too easy for him [Rushdie]. His mind must be tormented for the rest of his life unless he asks for forgiveness to Almighty Allah."⁸⁵ Sacranie is also involved with the Inter Faith Network, and has contributed to its reports.⁸⁶

Further, after Ayatollah Khomeini called for the murder of the Indian author, Ahsan expressed support for this position, saying that Khomeini "has expressed the Islamic legal point of view," and "we hope other Islamic governments will confirm this."⁸⁷ Ahsan has added, "That Rushdie is an apostate and has blasphemed against Islam by abusing the Prophet in *The Satanic Verses* has not

⁷⁸ <http://www.interfaith.org.uk/>

⁷⁹ Confirmed by the Treasurer of the IFN, Mr Ramesh Shah, at the IFN Annual General Meeting of 1 July 2013

⁸⁰ http://apps.charitycommission.gov.uk/Accounts/Ends34/0001068934_AC_20111231_E_C.PDF

⁸¹ <http://www.interfaith.org.uk/about.htm>

⁸² Stand for Peace interview with IFN delegate

⁸³ Our shunning of the MCB is not grandstanding, Hazel Blears, *The Guardian*, 25 March 2009

⁸⁴ 'Prosecute Rushdie, Says Moslem Group', Shenai Raif, *Press Association*, 19 September 1990

⁸⁵ Rushdie in hiding after Ayatollah's death threat, Peter Murtagh, *Guardian*, 18 February 1989

⁸⁶ <http://www.interfaith.org.uk/publications/nextdecade.pdf>

⁸⁷ 'Britain: Dilemma Over Rushdie Book Escalates', John Clements, *Inter Press Service*, 15 February 1989

only been maintained by Iran but also by more than 40 member states of the organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC).⁸⁸

Attempting to allay concerns that British protestors were closely collaborating with the Iranian regime, Ahsan added, “We accept we are living in a non-Muslim country and we have not issued the fatwa. If we wanted to kill him we could have done it.”⁸⁹

British taxpayers are right to question whether a leading British Islamist involved in a campaign of violent rhetoric and aggressive censorship is genuinely committed to the principle of dialogue; let alone whether or not he was a suitable choice for chairman of the largest taxpayer-funded interfaith group in the UK.

Ahsan is also the Director of the Islamic Foundation, which is the leading publisher of books by Abul Ala Mawdudi, the founder of Bangladeshi group Jamaat-e-Islami, which was responsible for acts of genocide during the 1971 war in Bangladesh. Lord Carlile, in his government paper on preventing violent extremism, noted that Mawdudi was a key influence in the radicalisation of young Muslims⁹⁰. In his book, *Islamic Law and Constitution*, Mawdudi wrote that his ideal state would bear “a kind of resemblance to the fascist and communist states.”⁹¹

In 2003, *The Times* reported that two of the Islamic Foundation’s trustees were on the UN sanctions list of people associated with the Taliban and al-Qaeda.⁹²

Sughra Ahmed, another executive committee member of the IFN,⁹³ was also previously a research fellow at the Islamic Foundation. Ahmed is presently connected to the Islamic Society of Britain. According to the former Muslim Brotherhood spokesman in the West, Kamal el-Helbawy, the Islamic Society of Britain was established by the Muslim Brotherhood.⁹⁴

The IFN’s executive committee also includes Ayub Laher,⁹⁵ who is part of the ultra-conservative Deobandi movement. Laher belongs to Jamiat Ulama-e-Britain (JuB), the representative body of Deobandi scholars in Britain, whose Pakistani branch, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam, is “directly affiliated” to Pakistani Deobandi seminaries with close ties to the Taliban.⁹⁶ The Pakistani group’s leader, Fazlur Rehman, described in Pakistan as a “patron of jihad”, has stated that his organisation and the Ayub Laher’s JuB “have a unanimity of thought and ideology.”⁹⁷

⁸⁸ ‘Letter: Islam and the return of Rushdie as the prodigal son’, Manazir Ahsan, *The Independent*, 4 January 1991

⁸⁹ “This stupid book is not worth the paper it’s written on”, *The Guardian*, 14 February 1990

⁹⁰ ‘Report to the Home Secretary of Independent Oversight of Prevent Review and Strategy’, Lord Carlile, 2011, Point 21 -

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97977/lord-carlile-report.pdf

⁹¹ http://news.bbc.co.uk/newswatch/ifs/low/newsid_4290000/newsid_4290800/4290840.stm

⁹² ‘The colleges with links to Islamist movements’, Sean O’Neill, *The Times*, July 29 2004

⁹³ <http://www.interfaith.org.uk/exec.htm>

⁹⁴ ‘A talk with Former Muslim Brotherhood Spokesman Dr. Kamal al- Hilbawi’, Abdulsattar Hatitah, *Asharq Al-Awsat*, 5 June 2011. <http://asharq-e.com/news.asp?section=3&id=25437>

⁹⁵ <http://www.interfaith.org.uk/exec.htm>

⁹⁶ ‘Two faces of British youth in thrall to sinister Muslim sect’, Andrew Norfolk, 8 September 2007.

⁹⁷ ‘Two faces of British youth in thrall to sinister Muslim sect’, Andrew Norfolk, 8 September 2007.

Laher (along with former IFN co-chair Manazir Ahsan) is an inaugural member of the Muslim Council of Britain. In 2002,⁹⁸ and again in 2004,⁹⁹ Laher represented the JuB on the MCB's Central Working Committee.

Sheikh Mohammad Ismail, general secretary of the JuB, claimed, in 2007, that the JuB was opposed to "any kind of political violence", telling *The Times* that, "You're trying to link us with terrorism. What about all those masonic and Zionist organisations? What about Palestine, what about Iraq? Where are those weapons of mass destruction? You never, ever talk about that."¹⁰⁰

Before their recent elections, the IFN's executive committee also included Abduljalil Sajid, a Brighton-based Imam. Sajid is an advisor to the Muslim Council of Britain, the largest Islamist-run member of the IFN. As mentioned above, in 2009, the British Government cut ties with the Muslim Council of Britain after its secretary general, Daud Abdullah, became a signatory to the Istanbul Declaration, which called for attacks on British troops and Jewish communities.¹⁰¹ The British Government has acknowledged that the Muslim Council of Britain is controlled by the extremist Jamaat-e-Islami movement, writing in a recent report that, "The JI helped to create and subsequently dominate the leadership of the MCB."¹⁰²

In 2006, Abduljalil Sajid voiced support for the Sheikh Taj Din al-Hilali, after Hilali claimed rape victims were to blame for their own sexual assault.¹⁰³ Hilali has also called for *jihad* against Israel,¹⁰⁴ supported suicide bombing, denied the Holocaust, glorified the 9/11 attacks, and in 1988 told Muslim students at Sydney University that Jews use "sex and abominable acts of buggery, espionage, treason and economic hoarding to control the world."¹⁰⁵ Despite Hilali's long history of extremist statements, IFN committee member Sajid, immediately following Hilali's castigation of rape victims, stated: "I respect his views. His intentions are noble in order to make morality and modesty part of our overall society."¹⁰⁶

Another member group of the IFN is the UK branch of Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), a Hindu ultra-nationalist group, which for several years provided the Hindu Co-Chair of the Inter Faith Network, Girdari Lal Bhan. According to Human Rights Watch, the Indian VHP was one of the organisations "directly responsible" in 2002 for carrying out large-scale anti-Muslim violence,¹⁰⁷ in which thousands were killed. In addition, the BBC reports that "preliminary police reports name local leaders of the hardline Vishwa Hindu Parishad in attacks that left nearly 100 Muslims dead."¹⁰⁸ In 2007, Anil Patel, a VHP official in India, told one Indian newspaper that, "Our war cry was 'Lock the door from outside and burn the Muslims from the inside.'"¹⁰⁹ The VHP has carried out scores of

⁹⁸ MCB Central Working Committee: 2002.

<http://web.archive.org/web/20021229184049/http://www.mcb.org.uk/cwc.html>

⁹⁹ MCB Central Working Committee: 2004.

<http://web.archive.org/web/20041214052505/http://www.mcb.org.uk/cwc.html>

¹⁰⁰ Andrew Norfolk, Two faces of British youth in thrall to sinister Muslim sect, 8 September 2007.

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/faith/article2098587.ece>

¹⁰¹ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2009/mar/25/islam-terrorism>

¹⁰² 'The Pakistani Muslim Community in England: Understanding Muslim Ethnic Communities', Department for Communities and Local Government, Page 40

¹⁰³ <http://www.theage.com.au/news/national/ethnic-leaders-condemn-muslim-cleric/2006/10/26/1161749223822.html>

¹⁰⁴ <http://www.memri.org/report/en/0/0/0/0/0/1065.htm>

¹⁰⁵ <http://www.religionnewsblog.com/16389/editorial-time-to-muzzle-the-outrageous-mufti>

¹⁰⁶ 'Briton backs imam in "uncovered meat" row', *The Times* (London), October 28, 2006

¹⁰⁷ <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2002/04/29/india-gujarat-officials-took-part-anti-muslim-violence>

¹⁰⁸ http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/1857414.stm

¹⁰⁹ 'Sabarkantha: Nowhere To Run', Ashish Khetan, *Tehelka*, November 3 2007

attacks on Christians in India, including murders, rapes and the destruction of dozens of churches.¹¹⁰

Joseph Interfaith Foundation

The Joseph Interfaith Foundation (JIF) is one of the leading member groups of the IFN. Mehri Niknam, formerly Director of the Maimonides Foundation (another interfaith group), founded the JIF in 2006.¹¹¹ JIF claims to be an “officially joint Muslim-Jewish interfaith organisation that is committed to fostering engagement through a constructive and realistic dialogue between the Muslim and Jewish communities in Britain.”¹¹²

The Joseph Interfaith Foundation works closely with Imam Abdul Qayyum, who is a member of “National Council of Imams and Rabbis” (a registered operating name of the Joseph Interfaith Foundation).¹¹³ Qayyum is a signatory to the unambiguously anti-Semitic and pro-terror Istanbul Declaration.

Mehri Niknam is also a member of the Islamic Foundation’s advisory board,¹¹⁴ despite its links to Jamaat war criminals. Her colleagues at the Islamic Foundation include Khurshid Ahmad, chairman of the board of trustees¹¹⁵ and also rector of the Markfield Institute (further information below). Ahmad was also vice-president of Jamaat-e-Islami in Pakistan, the Islamist group that the Bangladesh war crimes tribunal holds responsible for mass-murder, abduction and torture during the 1971 War of Independence.¹¹⁶ After the 9/11 attacks, Ahmad expressed his admiration for the Taliban.¹¹⁷

Niknam works closely with the Muslim Council of Britain¹¹⁸ and speaks at their events.¹¹⁹ Khurshid Drabu, a prominent founding MCB official, is a trustee of the JIF.¹²⁰ The Council is also dominated by extreme Islamists associated with Jamaat-e-Islami (see the MCB section above), whose former deputy secretary general signed the infamous Istanbul Declaration.¹²¹

A former trustee of the JIF is Lord Ahmed. In 2012, while a trustee, Ahmed was suspended from the Labour Party after he claimed on Pakistani television that he was only jailed for dangerous driving in 2008 because of pressure on the courts from “Jews” who “own newspapers and TV channels”. He also claimed that the judge in the 2008 case was appointed to his position after he helped a “Jewish colleague” of Tony Blair during an important case.¹²²

¹¹⁰ ‘Vatican condemns anti-Christian violence by Hindu extremists in Orissa’, Rhys Blakely, The Times, August 27 2008

¹¹¹ <http://www.josephinterfaithfoundation.org/joseph-main/previous/attachments/Al-Maktoum%20College%20Open%20Lectures%202012%20-%20MN.pdf>

¹¹² <http://www.josephinterfaithfoundation.org/joseph-main/index.php>

¹¹³ <http://www.josephinterfaithfoundation.org/joseph-main/religiousLeaders.php>

¹¹⁴ http://standforpeace.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/invite_advisoryboard_islamicfoundation.pdf

¹¹⁵ <http://www.islamic-foundation.org.uk/User/BoardofTrustees.aspx>

¹¹⁶ ‘The colleges with links to Islamist movements’, Sean O’Neill, The Times, July 29 2004

¹¹⁷ <http://www.danielpipes.org/blog/2003/05/londonistan-follies>

¹¹⁸ <http://www.josephinterfaithfoundation.org/joseph-main/religiousLeaders.php>

¹¹⁹ <http://www.josephinterfaithfoundation.org/joseph-main/previous/mehriMCB.php>

¹²⁰ <http://www.josephinterfaithfoundation.org/joseph-main/whoWeAre.php>

¹²¹ <http://standforpeace.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/istanbul-declaration.pdf>

Also see: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2009/mar/25/islam-terrorism>

¹²² <http://standforpeace.org.uk/disgraced-lord-ahmed-blames-zionist-lobby-for-press-tv-ban/>

In 2005, Ahmed hosted a book launch in the House of Lords for a man called Israel Shamir. Shamir is, in fact, a notorious anti-Semite also known as Jöran Jermas. Shamir's speech at the meeting included statements such as: "Jews indeed own, control and edit a big share of mass media, this mainstay of Imperial thinking. ... In the Middle East we have just one reason for wars, terror and trouble — and that is Jewish supremacy drive . . . in Iraq, the US and its British dependency continue the same old fight for ensuring Jewish supremacy in the Middle East. ... The Jews like an Empire . . . This love of Empire explains the easiness Jews change their allegiance. ... Now, there is a large and thriving Muslim community in England . . . they are now on the side of freedom, against the Empire, and they are not afraid of enforcers of Judaic values, Jewish or Gentile. This community is very important in order to turn the tide."¹²³

When journalist Stephen Pollard contacted Ahmed for comment, Ahmed refused to condemn Shamir or, in fact, issue any comment at all. A year later, the Joseph Interfaith Foundation invited Lord Ahmed to become a trustee of the charity.

Ahmed has participated in trips to meet with Hamas leader Ahmad Bahar, a senior Hamas terrorist who has called for the killing of Jews worldwide: "Make us victorious over the community of infidels... Allah, take the Jews and their allies, Allah, take the Americans and their allies... Allah, annihilate them completely and do not leave any one of them."¹²⁴

In 2010, Lord Ahmed met with the Al Qaeda activist Abu Rideh¹²⁵ and campaigned against the Government's decision to bar the extreme Islamist Zakir Naik from entering the UK.¹²⁶

In 2012 Ahmed suggested that the attempted murder of Malala Yousafzai was a false flag operation designed to discredit the Taliban.¹²⁷ Ahmed has also given a parliamentary lobby pass to a representative of Middle East Monitor, a leading pro-Hamas group¹²⁸ for which Ahmed is also an honorary advisor.¹²⁹

Lord Sheikh, a Conservative Peer, is another trustee of the JIF.¹³⁰ Sheikh has voiced praise for Al-Muntada, a fundamentalist Salafi charity, at whose events he is a "VIP speaker".¹³¹ In 2009, Sheikh led a delegation organised by the Palestinian Return Centre to meet with Syria's President Assad.¹³² Intelligence services have claimed that the Palestinian Return Centre is a lobby group for the Palestinian terrorist group Hamas.¹³³

¹²³ Lord Ahmed's unwelcome guest, Stephen Pollard, The Times, 7 April 2005

¹²⁴ <http://hurryupharry.org/2011/07/26/tony-lloyd-mp-baroness-falkner-and-hamas/>

¹²⁵ <http://www.hhugs.org.uk/mahmud-abu-rideh/82>

¹²⁶ Archived snapshot of Pakistani news website: <http://web.archive.org/web/20101024065456/http://www.thenews.com.pk/21-10-2010/World/11134.htm>

¹²⁷ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/9648783/Schoolgirl-Malala-Yousafzai-could-be-victim-of-government-plot-Labour-peer-claimed.html>

¹²⁸ <http://hurryupharry.org/2012/01/31/hamas-in-parliament/>

¹²⁹ <http://www.middleeastmonitor.com/about-us>

¹³⁰ <http://www.josephinterfaithfoundation.org/joseph-main/whoWeAre.php>

¹³¹ <http://www.conservativemuslimforum.com/news~events/news-&-past-events/almuntada-alislami-trust-25th-anniversary-gala/103> Also see: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a-Zn7fHbPvg&feature=related>

¹³² 'Report on the Parliamentarian Delegation to Syria', Page 15, Palestinian Return Centre, 2009

¹³³ http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/data/pdf/PDF_11_339_2.pdf

In May 2010, Lord Sheikh was the keynote speaker at a charity dinner for Interpal, which, in 2003, the United States government classified as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist group.¹³⁴ Interpal's leading official, Ibrahim Hewitt, openly supports Hamas and has called for the killing of homosexuals.¹³⁵

Lord Sheikh's chief of staff is Omar Faruk, who is also a CEO of an organisation called EcoMuslim, of which Sheikh is a patron. Faruk has spoken alongside a number of hate preachers as well as representatives of Hizb-ut-Tahrir (also alongside another representative of the Three Faiths Forum, another interfaith group).¹³⁶

Partners with which the JIF "regularly cooperates"¹³⁷ include:

East London Mosque & London Muslim Centre

The East London Mosque is the home of the Islamic Forum of Europe, the European branch of Jamaat-e-Islami that controls the institution. The British Government has published a report that asserts the East London Mosque is "the key institution for the Bangladeshi wing of Jamaat-e-Islami in the UK."¹³⁸ The JIF has held events at the Mosque, despite its connections to terror and use as a platform for hate preachers.¹³⁹

Recently, for example, the Mosque hosted an event with Assim al-Hakeem,¹⁴⁰ who teaches that apostates must be killed.¹⁴¹ He also advocates the execution of Christians and Jews for "talking against Mohammed."¹⁴² Other preachers invited to speak the East London Mosque include Saad al-Beraik,¹⁴³ a "prominent [Saudi] government official cleric" who refers to Jews as "monkeys" and has said, "Muslim brothers in Palestine, do not have any mercy neither compassion on the Jews, their blood, their money, their flesh. Their women are yours to take, legitimately. God made them yours. Why don't you enslave their women? Why don't you wage jihad? Why don't you pillage them?"¹⁴⁴

Despite the recurrent presence of hate preachers such as Hakeem at the institution, over the last six years the East London Mosque has received £2.9 million of public funds.¹⁴⁵

¹³⁴ US Treasury Press Release - "U.S. Designates Five Charities Funding Hamas and Six Senior Hamas Leaders as Terrorist Entities", 8/22/2003, #JS-672

¹³⁵ <http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/3514/terror-finance>

¹³⁶ <http://standforpeace.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/Omar-Faruk-3FF-and-Hizb.jpg>

¹³⁷ <http://www.josephinterfaithfoundation.org/joseph-main/links.php>

¹³⁸ 'The Pakistani Muslim Community in England: Understanding Muslim Ethnic Communities', Department for Communities and Local Government, Page 40

¹³⁹ http://www.josephinterfaithfoundation.org/joseph-main/previous/attachments/meettherabbis_alt.pdf

¹⁴⁰ <http://hurryupharry.org/2013/07/01/the-east-london-mosque-a-place-for-hate/>

¹⁴¹ <http://www.assimalhakeem.net/node/5858>

¹⁴² <http://www.assimalhakeem.net/node/2008>

¹⁴³ <http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/andrewgilligan/100122775/east-london-mosque-hosts-speaker-who-has-called-for-jewish-women-to-be-enslaved-and-pillaged/>

¹⁴⁴ <http://www.arabianews.org/english/article.cfm?qid=4&sid=6>

¹⁴⁵ Data taken from annual reports for financial years 2006-12, as filed with the UK Charity Commission

Forward Thinking

Forward Thinking is an interfaith group which works to “promote greater understanding and confidence between the diverse grassroots Muslim communities and the wider society.”¹⁴⁶ The group is chaired by William Sieghart, an outspoken supporter of the Palestinian terror group Hamas.¹⁴⁷

In 2008, Forward Thinking brought Tafazal Mohammad, a “suspected terrorist sympathiser closely linked to the July 7 bombers”,¹⁴⁸ to address a meeting in the British Parliament. Mohammad, along with 7/7 tube bomber Mohammad Siddique Khan, was a trustee of a jihadist bookshop.¹⁴⁹

In 2012, the *Jewish Chronicle* reported that the Pears Foundation, one of the Jewish community’s largest charitable trusts and interfaith funders,¹⁵⁰ granted £23,000 to Forward Thinking between 2008 and 2010.¹⁵¹

Islamic Cultural Centre & London Central Mosque

The Islamic Cultural Centre, based in London, organises “training for Non-Muslim Professionals, consultation with Government/Non Government organisations on Race Relations, meetings with the Metropolitan Police on Race relations, lectures and conferences on Islam in Universities, colleges, schools, Churches and Synagogues.”¹⁵²

The Centre’s director, Ahmad Al Dubayan, is described as a “Saudi diplomat”.¹⁵³ Dubayan is also a trustee of a school named the King Fahad Academy,¹⁵⁴ where, a former employee revealed, pupils were taught from textbooks that described Christians as “pigs” and Jews as “monkeys”. Students were even asked to “mention some repugnant characteristics of Jews.”¹⁵⁵

In 2008, a Channel 4 Dispatches program filmed preachers at the Centre calling upon Muslims to murder homosexuals and adulterers, stating that Muslims who convert to another religion should be slaughtered, and branding the behaviour of other races as “vile”.¹⁵⁶

Markfield Institute of Higher Education

The Markfield Institute is described by the Telegraph journalist Andrew Gilligan as “the key institution of Islamist higher education in the UK”.¹⁵⁷ The Institute was established by the Islamic Foundation - whose advisory board includes JIF’s Director Mehri Niknam - and which, as

¹⁴⁶ http://www.forwardthinking.org/?page_id=75

¹⁴⁷ ‘We must adjust our distorted image of Hamas’, William Sieghart, The Times, December 31 2008

¹⁴⁸ Muslim with intimate 7/7 links works for Scotland Yard, Rachel Williams, The Telegraph, 7 May 2011

¹⁴⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ <http://www.pearsfoundation.org.uk/#29/identity-community-citizenship-uk>

¹⁵¹ ‘Pears funded charity which hosted jihadist’, Martin Bright, Jewish Chronicle, 12 May 2011

¹⁵² Islamic Cultural Centre website - <http://www.iccuk.org/page.php?section=interfaith&page=interfaith>

¹⁵³ ‘Lessons in hate found at leading mosques’, Sean O’Neill, The Times, October 30 2007

¹⁵⁴ <http://www.thekfa.org.uk/wp/about/board-of-trustees/>

¹⁵⁵ Saudi-backed school ‘taught racism’, Sean O’Neill, The Times, February 6 2007

¹⁵⁶ <http://www.thisislondon.co.uk/news/article-23547868-caught-on-camera-hidden-side-of-the-british-mosque-where-female-preachers-urge-muslims-to-kill-non-believers.do>

¹⁵⁷ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/bangladesh/9204831/Leading-British-Muslim-leader-faces-war-crimes-charges-in-Bangladesh.html>

mentioned previously, is the leading publisher of books by Maududi, the founder of Jamaat-e-Islami, and Sayyid Qutb, the anti-Semitic Muslim Brotherhood ideologue.

Teachers and officials at Markfield have included: Azzam Tamimi, a leading British Islamist and senior lecturer at Markfield, who told the BBC in 2004 that he would willingly carry out a suicide bombing in Israel¹⁵⁸ and that “all the leaders of Hamas are my friends”;¹⁵⁹ Chowdhury Mueen-Uddin, who has been convicted by Bangladesh’s war crimes tribunal of abducting and murdering 18 people;¹⁶⁰ and Khurshid Ahmad, vice-president of Pakistan's Jamaat-e-Islami, who wrote that Afghan areas under Taliban rule were “the cradle of justice and peace.”¹⁶¹

The Joseph Interfaith Foundation, however, does not just partner with organisations that promote hatred; the problem is institutional. The JIF actively provides a platform for hate preachers and extremists.

In 2008, JIF organised an event titled “The Ultimate Saviour: A Multifaith Conference”.¹⁶² Speakers included:

Abdul Hussain Moezi, the personal representative of Iranian dictator Ayatollah Khamanei. Moezi is a trustee of the Irshad Trust, a charitable organisation that runs a religious school in London called Hawza Ilmiyya, where, according to *The Times*, students have been taught that non-Muslims are “filth”.¹⁶³

Mohammad Saeed Bahmanpour, who is a teacher at Hawza Ilmiyya. In 2007, Bahmanpour spoke at Al Quds Day in London,¹⁶⁴ an annual march organised by the Iranian regime, in which participants declare their support for the Iranian regime and the Lebanese terror group Hezbollah, and call for the destruction of Israel.¹⁶⁵ Bahmanpour is also a former President of the Christian Muslim Forum.¹⁶⁶

Mohammad Baqir Ansari, who has written in a journal published by the Islamic Thought Foundation and circulated by the Ahlul Bayt Digital Islamic Library Project (both organisations are closely connected to the Iranian regime¹⁶⁷) that, “After the victory of the Islamic Revolution of Iran which resulted in cutting off the hands of foreigners and unbelievers, especially the U.S. imperialism, from this country and which led to the awakening and awareness of the Muslims all over the world, pitifully, these so called Islamic elements and rulers of Islamic countries, instead of cooperating with this revolution and turning to Islam and their nations, turned their backs on both and looked toward the global arrogance, thus initiating their stratagems against the Islamic Ummah by reliance on kufr [derogatory term for non-believers].”¹⁶⁸

¹⁵⁸ <http://www.jpost.com/International/Cambridge-allows-event-with-supporter-of-suicide-bombing>

¹⁵⁹ <http://www.haaretz.com/news/middle-east/controversial-palestinian-academic-hails-martyrdom-u-k-event-1.415421>

¹⁶⁰ Bangladesh sentences UK and US residents to death over war crimes, *The Guardian*, 3 November 2013

¹⁶¹ British Islam colleges 'link to terrorism', Sean O'Neill, *The Times*, 29 July 2004

¹⁶² <http://www.josephinterfaithfoundation.org/joseph-main/previous/ultimatesaviour.php>

¹⁶³ ‘Muslim students 'being taught to despise unbelievers as filth’, Sean O'Neill, *The Times*, April 20 2006

¹⁶⁴ <http://www.inminds.co.uk/qudsday2007.php#bahmanpour>

¹⁶⁵ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iTRCQtGZQms>

¹⁶⁶ <http://www.christianmuslimforum.org/index.php/about-us/presidents>

¹⁶⁷ ‘Islam, Gender, and Social Change’, ed. Amherst Yvonne Yazbeck, page 79, Oxford University Press: London, 1998

Also see: <http://www.women.gov.ir/files/en/ebooks/pdf/73.pdf>

¹⁶⁸ ‘Tahrif al-Qur'an: A Study of Misconceptions Regarding Corruption of the Qur'anic Text’, Muhammad Baqir Ansari, *Al-Tawhid*, Vol. 4, No. 4, July 1997

In 2011, the JIF organised an exhibition at London Central Mosque's Islamic Cultural Centre, and invited Dr Abdullah bin Abdulmuhsin Al-Turki, the Secretary General of Muslim World League, as the keynote speaker.¹⁶⁹

The Muslim World League is a Saudi-based international organisation that promotes a fundamentalist interpretation of Islam. According to the Anti-Defamation League, the Muslim World League has provided financial support to a considerable number of terrorist organisations, including Hamas, Abu Sayyaf group, Moro Islamic Liberation Front, Jemaah Islamiyya and Al Qaeda.¹⁷⁰ In 2008, the Muslim World League organised its own 'interfaith' conference, at which a number of extreme anti-Semitic speakers were present -- including Yusuf Al Qaradawi, the spiritual leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, who told the Muslim World League conference that he would "never sit with a Jew on one platform".¹⁷¹

The Anti-Defamation League reports that the Muslim World League's leader, Al Turki, who was the guest speaker at the JIF's interfaith event, said at another event in 2001 that "the Jews' distortion of the book of Allah...is not a new matter—it is the natural disposition of the Jews who inherited this deception from their forefathers and their ancestors who perverted the Torah and Zaboor and the Bible...The new Hebrew translation of the meaning of the Holy Qur'an adds a new perfidy to the perfidies of the Jews."¹⁷²

In 2012, the JIF, represented by Mehri Niknam, conducted a discussion on Islamophobia with the Islamist lobby group Engage.¹⁷³ Over the past few years, Engage has lobbied Ministers to establish relations with the terror group Hamas and has harangued Muslim human rights activists who oppose Islamist extremism.¹⁷⁴ Engage has even promoted the writings of Laura Stuart, an openly anti-Semitic Islamist blogger.¹⁷⁵ In a piece titled 'What Good Muslims think of Jews', Stuart wrote, "The Quran is just full of stories of how the Jews are always arguing and plotting so, to be honest, even without Palestine/Israel, Muslims are always going to be viewed as the Jews' enemy number one."¹⁷⁶

Azad Ali is 'Head of Community Development' at Engage. Ali opposes democracy, "if it means at the expense of not implementing the *sharia* [Islamic religious law]."¹⁷⁷ He admits to attending talks by Abu Qatada, the spiritual leader of Al Qaeda in Europe,¹⁷⁸ and has stated that the leader of a prospective Islamist caliphate should be Ismail Haniyeh, head of the Palestinian terror group Hamas.¹⁷⁹ Ali was also an ardent fan of the late Al Qaeda terrorist Anwar Al-Awlaki, who was killed by a US drone strike in 2011.¹⁸⁰

¹⁶⁹ <http://www.josephinterfaithfoundation.org/joseph-main/previous/exhibitionIslam2.php>

¹⁷⁰ [http://archive.adl.org/NR/exeres/](http://archive.adl.org/NR/exeres/A2E75550-9493-4D30-93E8-2A398E6474CB,DB7611A2-02CD-43AF-8147-649E26813571,frameless.htm)

[A2E75550-9493-4D30-93E8-2A398E6474CB,DB7611A2-02CD-43AF-8147-649E26813571,frameless.htm](http://archive.adl.org/NR/exeres/A2E75550-9493-4D30-93E8-2A398E6474CB,DB7611A2-02CD-43AF-8147-649E26813571,frameless.htm)

¹⁷¹ http://archive.adl.org/PresRele/ASInt_13/5600_13.htm

¹⁷² Muslims USA, New York, May 2001 issue (as cited in 'Backgrounder: Muslim World League', Anti-Defamation League website)

¹⁷³ <http://www.josephinterfaithfoundation.org/joseph-main/previous/engageProject.php>

¹⁷⁴ <http://hurryupharry.org/2011/02/18/why-iengage-must-not-serve-as-the-secretariat-to-the-appg-on-islamophobia/>

¹⁷⁵ <http://standforpeace.org.uk/anti-racism-group-promotes-extreme-anti-jewish-blogger-laura-stuart/>

¹⁷⁶ <http://pauleisen.blogspot.co.uk/2013/01/what-good-muslims-think-of-jews-by.html>

¹⁷⁷ <http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/andrewgilligan/100060409/britains-islamic-republic-full-transcript-of-channel-4-dispatches-programme-on-lutfur-rahman-the-ife-and-tower-hamlets-the-full-transcript/>

¹⁷⁸ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-17034299>

¹⁷⁹ <http://blog.islamicforumeurope.com/2008/09/25/amir-al-mu%E2%80%99minun/>

¹⁸⁰ <http://blog.islamicforumeurope.com/2008/11/05/iman-the-new-president-and-you/>

Ali has also justified the killing of coalition troops in Iraq.¹⁸¹ In January 2010, he failed in his attempt to sue the Mail on Sunday and Daily Mail over articles which he claimed had characterised him as “a hardline Islamic extremist who supports the killing of British and American soldiers in Iraq.” Associated Newspapers argued that Ali's observations in his blog advocated a form of jihad, which could only be understood as justifying the killing of coalition troops in Iraq. Justice Eady said Ali's case was bound to fail and had about it “an absence of reality”.¹⁸²

At the event, Niknam spoke alongside Iqbal Sacranie, a trustee of Engage.¹⁸³ Sacranie has been chairman of the Muslim Council of Britain and is closely involved with the East London Mosque – both of which frequently promote extreme Islamist preachers. Sacranie has said of Salman Rushdie, “Death is perhaps too easy”.¹⁸⁴ On BBC Panorama in 2005, Sacranie described Abul ‘Ala Maududi -- the Indian-born ideologue who founded the Islamist group Jamaat-e-Islami -- as “a renowned scholar”, adding: “I have read many of his books and I believe he is one of the scholars that I certainly feel is an inspiration to many of us.”¹⁸⁵

The Joseph Interfaith Foundation has been funded by the taxpayer. In 2009, it received £21,447 from the Department for Communities and Local Government and the Fulbright Commission.¹⁸⁶

London Citizens

London Citizens is a group of self-appointed “community organisers”, founded by Neil Jameson in association with the extremist East London Mosque and the Jamaat-linked Islamic Forum of Europe (IFE).¹⁸⁷ London Citizens is part of Citizens UK, and counts interfaith dialogue as one its most important activities.¹⁸⁸

Jameson has said that he is “proud of the East London Mosque” and regards the Mosque and the IFE as “straightforward, sensible [and] excellent at developing and nurturing young people in proper behaviour in a democracy.”¹⁸⁹ He has also defended Hamas supporter Junaid Ahmed, who happens to be a “youth coordinator” for the IFE as well as Deputy Chairman of London Citizens, as someone who “neither promotes or condones terrorism, nor expresses support for any proscribed organisation.”¹⁹⁰

In reality, however, Ahmed has said that “every single [Palestinian] resistance fighter is an example for all of us to follow” (especially Hamas founder and leader Ahmed Yassin, whom he describes as a “hero”). Ahmed has praised Hamas for its “steadfastness” against Israel.¹⁹¹

¹⁸¹ 'Kill soldiers' Muslim blogger is back in job as Treasury civil servant, 12 July 2009. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1199099/Kill-soldiers-Muslim-blogger-job-Treasury-civil-servant.html>

¹⁸² 'Kill British' blog man fails in MoS libel bid, Oliver Luft, PA Media Lawyer, Press Gazette, 28 January 2010.

¹⁸³ <http://iengage.org.uk/about-us/engage-team>

¹⁸⁴ <http://spectator.org/archives/2005/08/09/the-secular-missionary>

¹⁸⁵ A question of Leadership, John Ware, Panorama, BBC 1, 21 August 2005.

¹⁸⁶ http://apps.charitycommission.gov.uk/Accounts/Ends84/0001119284_AC_20091231_E_C.PDF

¹⁸⁷ <http://hurryupharry.org/2011/05/31/neil-jameson-the-east-london-mosque-and-the-ife/>

¹⁸⁸ <http://www.citizensuk.org/2013/05/muslim-leaders-to-attend-citizens-uk-summit/>

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ <http://www.thejc.com/news/uk-news/49575/london-citizens-statement-junaid-ahmed>

¹⁹¹ <http://hurryupharry.org/2011/05/26/junaid-ahmed-hamas-heroes-and-london-citizens/>

Ruhana Ali, another London Citizens' official, is a presenter for the Islam Channel,¹⁹² which has been criticised for advertising the sermons of the late al-Qaeda cleric Anwar al-Awlaki¹⁹³ and was censured by Ofcom for promoting marital rape and domestic abuse.¹⁹⁴

Another London Citizens staff member is Omar Hajaj, Head of Campaigns for the Federation of Student Islamic Societies (FOSIS).¹⁹⁵ FOSIS has been criticised by Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg as an "organisation which has failed to challenge sufficiently terrorist and extremist ideologies."¹⁹⁶

Despite these dubious connections, London Citizens continues to enjoy the support of leading Jewish rabbis and interfaith activists,¹⁹⁷ and is reported to be "feted" by Prime Minister David Cameron and Labour Party Leader Ed Miliband.¹⁹⁸ London Citizens has received thousands of pounds of taxpayers' money through local Government and police grants.¹⁹⁹

Citizens UK's chapters comprise of a number of extremist organisations, including:

Al Muntada Al Islami Trust²⁰⁰ – a Salafi charity which regularly hosts hate preachers at their events and conferences, including Muhammad Al Arifi, who encourages *jihad* against 'non-believers' and believes that "devotion to Jihad for the sake of Allah, and the desire to shed blood, to smash skulls and to sever limbs for the sake of Allah and in defence of His religion, is, undoubtedly, an honour for the believer."²⁰¹ Nigerian newspapers have accused the charity of funding *Boko Haram*,²⁰² an Al Qaeda-affiliated terror group.

Islamic Centre of England – a religious centre run by representatives of the Iranian regime. Ayatollah Moezi, who runs the school, describes himself as the personal representative of Grand Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. The Centre's officials also run *Hawza Ilmiyya*, a religious school where, in 2006, *The Times* reported that students at the religious school were being taught fundamentalist doctrines which describe non-Muslims as "filth".²⁰³ Other texts studied included a chapter on jihad — setting down the conditions under which Muslims are supposed to fight Jews and Christians.

Islamic Education Research Academy²⁰⁴ – an extreme Salafi group which tours hate preachers around Britain. Three iERA speakers have been banned from entering Britain: Bilal Philips, described by the US as an "unindicted co-conspirator" in the 1993 al-Qaeda attack on the World Trade Center; Zakir Naik, banned from the UK for saying that "every Muslim should be a terrorist"; and Hussein Yee, who openly preaches hatred against Jews, and claims that Jews in

¹⁹² <http://www.islamchannel.tv/hayaat/Presenter.aspx>

¹⁹³ <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/jan/10/islam-channel-radical-cleric-awlaki>

¹⁹⁴ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/8108132/Islamic-TV-channel-rapped-for-advocating-marital-rape.html>

¹⁹⁵ <http://hurryupharry.org/2012/09/19/campaigns-head-of-fosis-joins-aafia-siddiqui-protest/>

¹⁹⁶ <http://www.thejc.com/news/uk-news/57759/clegg-fosis-has-failed-challenge-extremist-ideologies>

¹⁹⁷ <http://www.thejc.com/news/uk-news/49791/rabbi-pain-over-london-citizens-link>

¹⁹⁸ <http://www.thejc.com/news/uk-news/51985/london-citizens-stand-their-man>

¹⁹⁹ 'Management Committee Report and Financial Statement', London Citizens, Charity Commission, March 2011

²⁰⁰ <http://www.citizensuk.org/chapters/west-london-citizens/wlcityzens/>

²⁰¹ <http://standforpeace.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Month-of-mercy-briefing-updated.pdf>

²⁰² 'Boko Haram's funding traced to UK', Taiwo Adisa, Tribune, 13 February 2012

²⁰³ 'Muslim students being taught to despise unbelievers as filth', Sean O'Neill, The Times, 20 April 2006

²⁰⁴ <http://www.citizensuk.org/nlcityzens/>

America were “happy” when the Twin Towers fell.²⁰⁵

Islamic Forum of Europe – a Jamaat-e-Islami group based at the extremist East London Mosque (also a London Citizens member body).²⁰⁶ IFE leaders were recorded expressing support for sharia law and mocking black people. The IFE organised meetings with extremists, including allies of the Taliban.²⁰⁷

Christian Muslim Forum

The Christian Muslim Forum is an IFN member body which works to “live faithfully with difference, and work together to heal Christian-Muslim relationships.”²⁰⁸ The Forum’s patron is the head of the United Kingdom’s established church, the Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby. The co-chairman is Ibrahim Mogra,²⁰⁹ an official of the extremist Muslim Council of Britain (also an IFN member body).

The Forum’s Presidents include Toufik Kacimi, chairman of the Muslim Welfare House, a key institution - according to the Muslim counter-extremist thinktank, the Quilliam Foundation - of the Muslim Brotherhood in the UK. Other Forum Presidents include Ibrahim Mogra, an official of the Muslim Council of Britain, as well as Mohammad Saeed Bahmanpour, a regular speaker at Al Quds Day, a march in support of the Lebanese terror group Hezbollah and the Iranian regime.

The Forum’s annual report boasts of its collaboration with Islamist groups such as the Islamic Foundation and the Jamaat-linked²¹⁰ Islamic Society of Britain.²¹¹ The Forum has also run joint events with Engage,²¹² the Islamist lobby group that campaigns against Muslim anti-Islamist activists.²¹³

Speakers at Christian Muslim Forum events have included Sheikh Ahmed Haneef, a preacher who presents a show on the Iranian regime-funded television channel, Press TV. The journalist Nick Cohen has described Press TV as “a platform for the full fascist conspiracy theory of supernatural Jewish power”.²¹⁴ Press TV was banned from British airwaves after it broadcast film of forced confessions of political prisoners in Iran. Haneef has presented a number of shows for Press TV on “Islam and anti-Semitism”, in which he and his guest claimed anti-Semitism was not a real form of bigotry against Jews, and, as a term, is utilised solely for political means.²¹⁵ Haneef’s guest also claims – to no objection from Haneef - that anti-Semitism is the product of “Jewish hegemony” and supposed Jewish “genocide” of non-Jews.

The Christian Muslim Forum receives the bulk of its funding from the Near Neighbours scheme

²⁰⁵ <http://standforpeace.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/iERA.pdf>

²⁰⁶ <http://www.citizensuk.org/telcocitizens/>

²⁰⁷ ‘Islamic radicals ‘infiltrate’ the Labour Party’, Andrew Gilligan, Daily Telegraph, 27 February 2010

²⁰⁸ http://www.christianmuslimforum.org/images/uploads/CD6_Strategy_Outline_Final.pdf

²⁰⁹ <http://www.christianmuslimforum.org/index.php/about-us/presidents>

²¹⁰ <http://hurryupharry.org/2013/07/24/sabin-khan-the-islamist-ally-in-the-home-office/>

²¹¹ http://apps.charitycommission.gov.uk/Accounts/Ends93/0001114793_AC_20121231_E_C.pdf

²¹² <http://www.iaw.org.uk/pages/page.php?id=events>

²¹³ <http://hurryupharry.org/2011/02/18/why-iengage-must-not-serve-as-the-secretariat-to-the-appg-on-islamophobia/>

²¹⁴ Ofcom is allowing an Iranian broadcaster to undermine our sense of broadcasting balance, Nick Cohen, The Guardian, 4 December 2011

²¹⁵ http://www.shiatv.net/view_video.php?viewkey=fef79e2ae788d9735679

(£83,225 in 2012), which is managed by the Church Urban Fund.²¹⁶ The Near Neighbours scheme, although managed by the Church of England, is completely taxpayer-funded.²¹⁷

University Campuses

Interfaith dialogue is, naturally, employed on British university campuses and promoted by student unions and faculties. The National Union of Students works closely with two groups of concern: the Lokahi Foundation and the Federation of Student Islamic Societies (FOSIS).

Lokahi has previously associated itself with Muslim Brotherhood groups including the Cordoba Foundation and IslamExpo.²¹⁸ Several hundred thousand pounds of taxpayers' money has been given to the Lokahi Foundation²¹⁹ for its campus programme 'Campussalam'. The Islamist academic Tariq Ramadan, whom the US has previously refused a visa, is on the Lokahi Foundation's advisory board. Further, Lokahi's Director, Professor Gwen Griffith-Dickson, has complained that under present policy, "'Sufi' groups are the ones who enjoy the rights of the first born while the 'Islamists' are thrown out without an inheritance."²²⁰

FOSIS, established by Muslim Brotherhood and Jamaat-e-Islami activists in 1963,²²¹ functions as the umbrella group for a considerable number of student Islamic societies. It has expressed support for hate preachers, such as condemning the UK Government after Zakir Naik, a pro-terror hate preacher who told his audience that "Jews are our staunchest enemy", was banned from entering the UK.²²² Robert Halfon MP has described FOSIS-affiliated Islamic societies as "conveyor belts" to extremism and terrorism.²²³ Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, for example, who attempted to detonate a bomb in an airplane to the US, was the president of UCL Islamic Society.

Counter-terrorism expert Houriya Ahmed has noted that other terrorists involved with FOSIS-affiliated Islamic Societies include:²²⁴

Kafeel Ahmed, who died as a result of his Glasgow airport suicide attack on 30 June 2007, is believed by security sources to have been radicalised while studying for a PhD in computational fluid dynamics at Anglia Ruskin University in Cambridge.

Waheed Zaman, who was part of the 2006 'transatlantic liquid bomb' plot to detonate US bound flights mid-air, was convicted in June 2010 for conspiracy to murder. He was a biomedical science student at London Metropolitan University and president of its ISOC. Literature and audio cassettes from the radical group al-Muhajiroun were found in the ISOC's office.

Mohammed Naveed Bhatti, who was part of the 2004 'dirty bomb' plot, was convicted on 18 April 2007 for conspiracy to cause explosions. At the time of his arrest, Bhatti was studying for a postgraduate qualification in finite-element modelling and analysis at Brunel University. Bhatti

²¹⁶ http://apps.charitycommission.gov.uk/Accounts/Ends93/0001114793_AC_20121231_E_C.pdf

²¹⁷ <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2011/feb/20/church-of-england-community-cohesion>

²¹⁸ <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200708/cmhansrd/cm080515/debtext/80515-0007.htm#08051586000002>

²¹⁹ <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200708/cmhansrd/cm080611/text/80611w0022.htm>

²²⁰ <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200708/cmhansrd/cm080625/halltext/80625h0001.htm>

²²¹ 'The Founding Mission', Emel, Issue 99, December 2012

²²² <http://instmed.org/2010/06/26/what-is-it-about-fosis/>

²²³ <http://conservativehome.blogs.com/centreright/2010/11/we-must-stop-the-conveyor-belt-to-terrorism.html>

²²⁴ <http://henryjacksonsociety.org/stories.asp?pageid=49&id=2245>

met the cell leader of the 'dirty bomb' plot, Dhiren Barot, at the university's prayer room in 2001.

Anthony Garcia and Jawad Akbar, part of the 2004 'fertiliser bomb' plot and convicted on 30 April 2007 for conspiracy to cause explosions, also engaged in extremist activity while at university. Garcia became radicalised between 1998 and 2003 after seeing videos at the University of East London ISOC depicting atrocities allegedly inflicted upon Muslims in Kashmir. Garcia went on to join al-Muhajiroun and Akbar attended al-Muhajiroun meetings while studying at Brunel University.

Mohammed Atif Siddique, convicted on September 2007 for disseminating terrorist publications and weapons training for terrorism, showed images of suicide bombers and beheadings to students at Glasgow Metropolitan College, where he was also a student.

FOSIS regularly hosts extremist speakers at its conferences and events, including Muhammad al-Kawthari, who demands death by stoning for those who have sex before marriage; Haitham Al-Haddad,²²⁵ who describes "Jews" as "eternal enemies" and the "sons of apes and pigs";²²⁶ as well as Anwar Al-Awlaki,²²⁷ a hate preacher who later became an Al Qaeda leader before his death in a US drone strike.

In November 2013, a number of universities decided, after complaints from students and gay activists, to cancel a series of proposed lectures by Mufti Ismail Menk, a Zimbabwean Islamist preacher.²²⁸ Menk has branded homosexuals as "filthy" and worse than "dogs and pigs".²²⁹ FOSIS, in response, condemned the criticism of Menk, whom the student body deemed to be "inspiring", and a "world renowned scholar, known for his moderate and tolerant approach."²³⁰

FOSIS is closely involved with a considerable number of interfaith programmes on campus. Following criticism of its extremist associations, however, FOSIS has expressed concern with interfaith initiatives that are "moving away from interfaith and instead focusing on preventing extremism."²³¹

What is the purpose of interfaith dialogue? If interfaith is not, as FOSIS suggests, to identify and stop the hatred that drives different faith communities apart, then one of the only practical consequences of interfaith dialogue appears to be the legitimacy it affords to group such as FOSIS, which hides behind the sanitising shield of a commitment to 'dialogue'; while their real nature lies unchallenged.

²²⁵ <https://docs.google.com/a/standforpeace.org.uk/spreadsheet/viewform?formkey=dDFHMXZZVXZiVUFfLW9uNV9FbINyckE6MQ>

²²⁶ <http://www.alminbar.net/alkhutab/khutbaa.asp?mediaURL=4359>

²²⁷ <http://hurryupharry.org/2011/06/09/the-revised-prevent-strategy-and-the-federation-of-student-islamic-societies/>

²²⁸ Universities cancel Muslim cleric's speaking tour over concerns about his anti-gay views, Sarah Morrison, The Independent, 7 November 2013

²²⁹ Saudi cleric who says consenting gay sex is as bad as 'rape' due to visit UK universities, Scott Roberts, Pink News, 5 November 2013

²³⁰ <https://www.facebook.com/fosischannel/posts/597162160321028>

²³¹ 'FOSIS Voices Concern at Interfaith Tour following Decision of Lord Nazir Ahmed to Withdraw', Press Release, FOSIS

Interfaith Cartel

It is clear that a considerable number of extremist groups involve themselves with interfaith dialogue in order to deflect attention from their underlying ideological designs. Interfaith provides such groups with political and moral legitimacy, as well as the possibility of taxpayer funding. How, then, does the network of interfaith groups respond when such exploitation is uncovered?

Interfaith as the Greater Good

In February 2013, two prominent Jewish organisations, Spiro Ark and Harif, co-hosted a debate, “Interfaith Dialogue: Does it Work?” — chaired by Martin Bright, then political editor of the Jewish Chronicle, and who subsequently reported the event.²³² Also represented on the panel were Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg, Revd Patrick Morrow of the Council of Christians and Jews, Revd Patrick Sookhdeo of the Barnabas Fund and Sheikh Muhammad Al-Hussaini of Scriptural Reasoning.

During the debate, both Revd Sookhdeo and Sheikh Al-Hussaini raised concerns about a “monetised and politicised” Interfaith Industry in which certain Islamist groups with a long history of promoting pro-terror and anti-Semitic sentiment were, in some cases, exploiting fashionable interfaith dialogue programmes as a means to sanitise their violent rhetoric, obtain public funding, acquire moral legitimacy and so reinforce their claim to be “moderate” representatives of Britain’s Muslim community.²³³ At the event, several members of the audience openly questioned the collusion between some Jewish and Christian leaders with Islamist groups in maintaining this taxpayer-funded Interfaith Industry.²³⁴

Further, in May 2013, a number of Muslim community activists — including Dr Chaudhuri of the Bangladesh War Crimes Committee, Nooruddin Ahmed of the Bangladesh Liberation War and War Crimes Campaign, as well as Ansar Ahmed Ullah of the Swadhinata Trust — joined with Jewish, Christian, Buddhist and Hindu activists to publish the multi-faith document, “An Open Letter to the Jewish Community Leadership: ‘Is the Jewish Community Talking to the Right Kind of Muslims?’”²³⁵

The multi-faith signatories to the open letter included members of the British Bangladeshi community who have been involved in bringing to account Jamaat-e-Islami members who participated in - and in some cases, directed - acts of genocide during the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War and are now resident in the UK. The multi-faith letter declared that genuine interfaith advocates are right to question:

“...whether Jewish interfaith representatives are talking to the “right kind of Muslims... The “wrong kind of Muslims” are associated with the extremist

²³² Martin Bright ‘Telling the Truth About Dialogue’, The Jewish Chronicle, 14 February 2013 <http://www.thejc.com/comment-and-debate/comment/102471/telling-truth-about-dialogue>

²³³ Spiro Ark Report, 11 February 2013 <http://www.spiroark.org/blog/908/report-on-our-joint-debate-on-interfaith-dialogue-with-harif/>

²³⁴ Harry’s Place, 15 February 2013 <http://hurryupharry.org/2013/02/15/interfaith-dialogue/>

²³⁵ Open Letter to the Jewish Community Leadership: “Is the Jewish Community Talking to the Right Kind of Muslims?”, Harry’s Place, 10 May 2013 — <http://hurryupharry.org/2013/05/10/open-letter-to-the-jewish-community-leadership-“is-the-jewish-community-talking-to-the-right-kind-of-muslims”/>

Jamaat-e-Islami, expressed in the UK through institutions such as the Islamic Foundation, Muslim Council of Britain and the East London Mosque.”²³⁶

The Muslim and other faith signatories appealed to the Board of Deputies of British Jews, and other Jewish leadership groups, about the Joseph Interfaith Foundation’s links to the extremist East London Mosque (ELM) as well as Chowdhury Mueen-Uddin, formerly Vice Chairman of the Mosque and Deputy Director of the Islamic Foundation. Uddin has been sentenced to death for his involvement in the Al-Badr death squad, with which he murdered 18 innocent civilians during the Bangladesh War.

The letter continued:

“Imam Abdul Qayyum leads the ELM’s official collaboration with the ‘National Council of Imams and Rabbis’ (a registered operating name of the Joseph Interfaith Foundation – not to be confused with other imams and rabbis groups)...Qayyum is a signatory to the unambiguously anti-Jewish and pro-Hamas Istanbul Declaration.”²³⁷

The Muslim and other faith signatories further stated that they “most urgently request the Board of Deputies of British Jews to clarify publicly the Board’s position and/or support for interfaith projects endorsed by the Muslim Council of Britain, Islamic Foundation and East London Mosque.”

To date, the Board of Deputies has provided no response to this appeal.

Following the Spiro Ark debate in February 2013, however, considerable pressure was applied by Christian and Jewish interfaith leaders upon the livelihoods and personal lives of some of the speakers and their close colleagues of different faiths.²³⁸

The interfaith industry’s connections to extremism appeared not to be an inadvertent partnership; but deliberate collusion – tacit endorsement of Islamist groups’ designs to lead and represent the Muslim community.

It appears that the interfaith movement does not permit dissent. Interfaith officials regarded the criticism expressed by concerned activists as a threat to the reputation, and perhaps the flow of public funding, enjoyed by the Interfaith Industry. In observing and denouncing the anti-Semitism and support for terror promoted by particular members of the interfaith movement, Muslim activists had shown Jewish and Christian interfaith representatives, through their deliberate inaction, to be passively complicit.

Concerns had previously been raised by signatories to the letter, along with other clergy, about apparent religious discrimination practised by the Inter Faith Network against smaller faith groups, allegedly in breach of the Equality Act 2010. In an event at the House of Lords in November 2012, Revd Peter Owen-Jones, a Church of England clergyman and BBC presenter, strongly criticised the Inter Faith Network for its exclusion of minority religious groups, stating “The Inter Faith Network

²³⁶ Open Letter to the Jewish Community Leadership: “Is the Jewish Community Talking to the Right Kind of Muslims?”, Harry’s Place, 10 May 2013 — <http://hurryupharry.org/2013/05/10/open-letter-to-the-jewish-community-leadership-“is-the-jewish-community-talking-to-the-right-kind-of-muslims”/>

²³⁷ *ibid*

²³⁸ Stand for Peace interview with IFN delegate

is publicly funded. By refusing entry to the Druid Network, it raises huge questions about whether it can continue to operate as a publicly funded body".²³⁹

The interfaith movement is not just a welter of groups; it is an industry.

But the industry does not just silence dissent; it also works, according to some interfaith activists, to discourage inter-religious dialogue with smaller faith groups, lest fundamentalist groups within the interfaith movement take offence.

Some Religions Are More Equal Than Others

In 2012, the Inter Faith Network refused membership²⁴⁰ to the first pagan organisation to be recognised as a religion by the Charity Commission.²⁴¹ The IFN, it appears, maintains a list of 'approved' religions: it grants membership to Bahá'í, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jain, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh and Zoroastrian bodies. Other religious bodies, it appears, have been deemed not the right sort of religion.

In November 2012, over twenty different religious groups came together at the House of Lords together with representatives of Liberty, INFORM and other academic bodies to express concern about religious discrimination against minority religious groups, such as the Ahmadiyya.²⁴² The meeting discussed a document published by human rights law firm, Bindmans LLP, which found that "the Inter Faith Network is found to have practised discrimination on grounds of religion or belief, contrary to the Equality Act 2010 and other law, in its membership policies against particular faith communities in Britain."²⁴³

In response to criticism, the IFN's executive committee published a statement in support of the discriminatory policy:

"The primary ground on which an inter faith organisation, such as IFN, may, within this context, define its parameters of membership is according to the 'purpose of the organisation'. If an organisation, the purpose of which is to 'foster or maintain good relations between persons of different religions or beliefs', concludes that that work could be seriously affected by the acceptance into membership of a particular organisation (or individual) ... a decision not to accept that membership application would be consistent with the relevant provisions in Schedule 23 [Equality Act 2010]. An example of this might be a decision by an inter faith organisation not to accept a membership application from a particular faith organisation if the admission to membership of that organisation could have the effect of leading to representative bodies of major faith communities withdrawing from membership of that inter faith organisation."²⁴⁴

²³⁹ Ruth Gledhill "Interfaith Group's Refusal to Admit Druids Sparks Row" The Times, 1 December 2012 <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/faith/article3617192.ece>

²⁴⁰ 'Interfaith group's refusal to admit Druids sparks row', Ruth Gledhill, The Times, 1 December 2012.

²⁴¹ 'Druids win fight for recognition as bona fide religion and charity', Ruth Gledhill, The Times, October 2 2010

²⁴² <http://www.demotix.com/news/1636944/religions-come-together-house-lords#media-1636867>

²⁴³ <http://www.religiousfreedom.org.uk/guidance.pdf>

²⁴⁴ 'The Legality of the Inter Faith Network's Membership Arrangements', Inter Faith Network, July 2012

To sum: it is acceptable to discriminate against a minority in order to protect the influence of the majority. For many anti-racist campaigners, such logic sits uncomfortably.

It is not just Pagans who face discrimination. Interfaith officials have rejected smaller Muslim groups because of a manifest fear that the presence of certain sects will upset the existing Islamist-dominated Islamic groups. Ahmaddiya Muslims are particularly reviled by radical Islamists, who regard the smaller sect as heretical.

The Muslim Council of Britain, a key member body of the IFN, issued a press release in October 2010, stating that: "The MCB's clear stand is Qadianis/Ahmadiyyas do not subscribe to the Muslim creed. This is the unanimous position of all Muslim schools of thoughts across the world."²⁴⁵

Harriet Crabtree, Director of the IFN, has done nothing to challenge this view. In an email sent to one interfaith activist in 2012, Crabtree stated, "The membership policy of IFN, and its engagement with traditions other than the nine at that time (and presently) in membership, was necessarily affected by the degree to which some of the faith communities in membership of it were able or willing to be in formal engagement with these other groups. That is a simple statement of fact."²⁴⁶

Government officials have also been complicit in promoting this exclusion. In 2011, Warwick Hawkins, Head of Faith Communities Engagement for the Department of Communities and Local Government, expressed concern for a proposed series of interfaith events, telling one interfaith activist: "We note that the (Ahmadiyya) Baitul Futuh Mosque is shown as a partner for the first of the events. Has consideration been given to how this will affect the participation of mainstream Muslims?"²⁴⁷

By whose standards are Islamists considered 'mainstream'? In Bangladesh, for example, Jamaat-e-Islami has won only two seats out of 300 in the last parliamentary election. Does this make them 'mainstream'? The majority of British Muslims certainly do not consider Jamaat-e-Islami to represent their views. Extremists have usurped the role of 'representatives' merely by being activists, and therefore the 'visible' face of British Islam. Yet it is the strategy for ideologues, of whatever hue, and wherever they are, to be activists.

It is for government to distinguish between ideologues and non-ideologues, instead of blindly engaging with those who appropriate 'representative' status for themselves merely by proclaiming themselves to be community activists. Government has a special responsibility here, because 'civil society' groups inevitably follow in the government's footsteps as far as partners for engagement are concerned.

It is the responsibility of the UK government to stop treating Islamists as 'representatives' of anyone but themselves. Government and interfaith officials should only collaborate with faith Muslims, who view religion as a private matter.

The Inter Faith Network is, in truth, feeding the same interfaith intolerance practised by Islamist leaders such as Yusuf Al Qaradawi, the spiritual leader of the Muslim Brotherhood – who, according to Qatari media, recently refused to participate in an interfaith conference in Doha because he

²⁴⁵ MCB Condemns Violence or Hatred Towards any Group, 22 October 2010.
http://www.mcb.org.uk/article_detail.php?article=announcement-932

²⁴⁶ Harriet Crabtree. harriet.crabtree@interfaith.org.uk. RE: Response to your email of 14 May. 7th June 2012.

²⁴⁷ Warwick Hawkins. warwick.hawkins@communities.gsi.gov.uk. RE: Inter Faith Week Grant Proposal – Scriptural Reasoning. 7th November 2011

would not share a platform with a Jew.²⁴⁸

It is an unusual practice for a network ostensibly dedicated to inter-religious dialogue to suppress dialogue with moderates in order to placate larger extremist organisations. For the publicly funded interfaith officials and their Government liaisons, however, it is not the pursuit of inter-religious dialogue, but the preservation of the extant interfaith industry, which best represents the greater good.

Those IFN member bodies dominated by Muslim Brotherhood and Jamaat-e-Islami have expressed strong support for a revised membership policy, which would allow current faith groups to decide whether or not a new interfaith group, perhaps led by Ahmaddiya or Pagans, should be admitted to the IFN. The IFN's Strategic Review recommended that:

"A non-local inter faith organisation may apply to join IFN [Inter Faith Network] if it...in the case of a formal dialogue body working on a bi-/tri-lateral basis, can provide references of support from at least two NFCRBs [National Faith Community Representative Bodies] in membership of IFN or two faith community bodies who are in membership of an umbrella body that is in membership of IFN in the NFCRB category"²⁴⁹

For those smaller interfaith groups and religious sects, the IFN looks like a closed club. Ahmaddiya groups certainly do not expect any support from the MCB. In 2010, an Ahmaddiya Liberal Democrat candidate was warned against attending an election hustings at the Balham Mosque Tooting Islamic Centre, which is affiliated to the Muslim Council of Britain. When the Conservative candidate arrived at the Centre, reportedly mistaken for the Ahmadiyya candidate, he was escorted to a safe room to protect him from attack.²⁵⁰

By proclaiming Islamic member bodies to be the 'voice' of British Islam, the IFN falsely legitimises groups like the Islamist-run Muslim Council of Britain as sincerely representative of British Muslims. A 2007 Policy Exchange poll revealed, however, that 94% of British Muslims do not believe that the Muslim Council of Britain represents their views.²⁵¹

Mehri Niknam, Director of the Joseph Interfaith Foundation (JIF), has been particularly vocal in her criticism of other national interfaith initiatives that threaten the supremacy of the JIF. In 2008, Niknam denounced a letter produced by another interfaith group, the Woolf Institute for Abrahamic Religions, signed by a number of prominent Muslims, and which called for increased dialogue with the Jewish community, as "more appropriate as an RE essay by a 15-year-old than a scholarly essay."²⁵² Niknam described her comments as a "a critique of its [the letter's] inaccuracies, lack of sources and methodology, and the questionable overall efficacy of such a letter."²⁵³

In December 2012, after reviewing the several months of harassment against another interfaith

²⁴⁸ 'Al Qaradawi boycotts Qatar meet attended by "Jews"', AFP, Gulf News, 23 April 2013

²⁴⁹ 'Report and Recommendations to the Inter Faith Network for the UK', Strategic Review Working Group, Inter Faith Network: Appendix H, June 2013

'Strategic Review', Inter Faith Network, July 2012

²⁵⁰ <http://blogs.spectator.co.uk/douglas-murray/2013/06/sadiq-khan-has-unwittingly-highlighted-the-problem-of-islamic-extremism/>

²⁵¹ <http://www.policyexchange.org.uk/images/publications/living%20apart%20together%20-%20jan%202007.pdf>

²⁵² 'The Muslim dialogue letter "is naive and flawed"', Mehri Niknam, The Jewish Chronicle, 28th February 2008.

²⁵³ Ibid.

activist, the Metropolitan Police issued a written warning to Mehri Niknam, informing her that if she continued to pursue her course of conduct she would be arrested and prosecuted.²⁵⁴

In July 2013, after a delegate at the IFN's national meeting in Birmingham told the conference that he had heard a senior IFN official claim that "Jews were a disease", and also condemned the Joseph Interfaith Foundation for its collaboration with signatories to the Istanbul Declaration,²⁵⁵ Mehri Niknam denied that Qayyum was a signatory to the document and condemned the comments as slanderous, to strong applause from other IFN members.²⁵⁶ Despite Niknam's denials, Qayyum's name is listed on a copy of the Arabic document.²⁵⁷

Three months after the meeting, the minutes for the meeting have not yet been released. Following the previous year's conference, at which the IFN was accused of discriminating against Pagan groups, delegates were later told that the entire recording of the meeting had been lost because the recording system had failed.²⁵⁸

IFN officials have refused to discuss the problem of extremists' abuse of interfaith initiatives with concerned interfaith advocates — Crabtree claims that, "IFN has neither the legal role, nor the investigative expertise to take on exploration of the basis of allegations about international (or domestic) activities which are deemed by some as 'extremist'."²⁵⁹

²⁵⁴ Complaint made to DC Carol Corder, 8 November 2012.

²⁵⁵ Stand for Peace interview with IFN delegate

²⁵⁶ *ibid.*

²⁵⁷ <http://almoslim.net/node/107077>

²⁵⁸ http://www.interfaith.org.uk/publications/2012_nat_meeting_report.pdf, Page 2

²⁵⁹ Harriet Crabtree, IFNet@interfaith.org.uk, Request for Meeting with the Co-Chairs of the Inter Faith Network, 4 October 2013

Interfaith Legitimacy

The exploitation of interfaith dialogue is not just a European phenomenon; Islamist groups across the world have involved themselves in a variety of interfaith initiatives.

In Turkey, Adnan Oktar is a well-known author who also goes by the name Harun Yahya. He is the founder of Islamist group *Bilim Araştırma Vakfı* (Science Research Foundation). He and his group also present an interfaith programme on the A9 television channel, which claims to promote “peace and love” between all peoples.

Outside Turkey, two very different groups admire Oktar and his work. On the one hand, Oktar’s publications, as well as speakers from his organisation, make regular appearances among European Islamist groups who admire Oktar’s diatribes against science, atheism and Zionism. The other collection of admirers, however, can be found among media outlets such as the *Jewish Press*, who have hailed Oktar and his ‘disciples’, and their interfaith work, as brave and brilliant moderates who deserve our gratitude and support.²⁶⁰

This is an unlikely coupling. Who is the real Oktar?

In the 1990s, Oktar, using his pen name Harun Yahya, published a book entitled *The Holocaust Hoax*. Oktar now claims he did not write it, and that it was actually authored by another Turk named Nuri Özbudak. A 1997 article claims:

“Controversy over the book 'Holocaust Lie - The Inside Story of the Secret History of the Zionist-Nazi Co-operation and the Lie about Jewish Genocide' continues to attract media attention. In March 1996 Bedri Baykam, a prominent painter and intellectual, published a critique of the book in the Ankara daily *Siyah Beyaz* (Black and White). Baykam was subsequently sued for slander by Nuri Özbudak, who claims to have written the book under the pseudonym of Harun Yahya. At the trial Baykam exposed the real author as Adnan Oktar, leader of the Islamist group Bilim Arastirma Vakfi. In March 1997, however, Özbudak withdrew the case.”²⁶¹

The Guardian has described Oktar’s denials as “hard to believe”.²⁶² In several of Oktar’s other books, he lists the Holocaust Hoax as one of his own works.²⁶³

Oktar recently published details of some of his other books, which include a number of openly anti-Semitic texts.²⁶⁴ In 'Judaism and Freemasonry', described by *Newsweek* as an “anti-Semitic tract”, Oktar states: “The principal mission of Jews and Freemasons in Turkey was to erode the spiritual, religious, and moral values of the Turkish people and make them like animals.”²⁶⁵

²⁶⁰ <http://www.jewishpress.com/tag/adnan-oktar/>

²⁶¹ <http://www.axt.org.uk/antisem/archive/archive1/turkey/turkey.htm>

²⁶² <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2007/aug/20/shootingthemessenger>

²⁶³ <http://standforpeace.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/The-Moral-Values-Of-The-Quran.pdf>

²⁶⁴ http://standforpeace.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/complete_works_of_Harun_Yahya.pdf

²⁶⁵ *ibid.*

In Oktar's 'Behind the Scenes of the Holocaust', he claims: "It is true that the Nazis constructed concentration camps and confined millions of Jewish civilians in them. ... However, the question that must be asked is this: Were these people poisoned in gas chambers and burnt in ovens as an ethnic group, or did they die as a result of the outbreak of disease in the camps or did they starve to death because of the general scarcity of food after the war? This book demonstrates with historical and scientific proof that the second of the above explanations is the true one."²⁶⁶

In light of these statements, why are some commentators willing to assume Oktar's interfaith efforts are sincere? Oktar and his group, in fact, have worked hard to expunge evidence of his former statements. In the Turkish courts, he has successfully shut down hundreds of websites exposing his former publications and activities.

It was after the 9/11 terrorist attacks that Oktar altered his methods. He ceased his outbursts against Jews, and started claiming that "Darwinism" was the real cause of the very anti-Semitism that he himself had espoused just a few years previously. It was around this time that references to Oktar's *Holocaust Hoax* were removed from his websites. Not long after, Oktar published a new book, entitled, *Islam Denounces Terrorism*.

Most noticeably, rather than apologise or admit to his past anti-Semitism, Oktar chose to deny he had ever held anti-Jewish views or had ever written anti-Semitic tracts. Further, as with his anti-Semitism, Oktar now claims that acts of terrorism are a product of the sinister "Darwinism" that has supposedly infected society.

As for Oktar's current platform, the A9 television channel, it does not just pursue interfaith dialogue; it also advocates for Islamic Unity — an idea that, while cloaked in the language of progressive human rights rhetoric, is remarkably similar to Islamist designs for a global Caliphate. In a number of videos, Oktar claims that "Islamic Unity" is threatened by secret US plans to bomb Turkey; PKK terrorism; Communist subterfuge and New World order plots.²⁶⁷

But why does Adnan Oktar now publicly embrace Jews through his 'interfaith' work, while still promoting extremist ideas? The evolving face of Turkish Islamism helps to explain that. Years ago, Turkey's Justice and Welfare Party (AKP) concluded that it was actually by embracing the democratic process that they could best propagate their anti-democratic ideas.

This has worked well. In early 2013, an editorial in *The Times* opined:

"Political Islam is perfectly compatible with democracy. Turkey has been governed since 2002 by the Justice and Development Party, an Islamist organisation. There is no necessary reason that the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt should, having won an election, exercise power autocratically."²⁶⁸

Oktar is no different. By presenting a form of Islamism that can "engage" with Jewish groups, he is able to propagate his message far more effectively. It is tempting to dismiss Oktar and his cult as irrelevant. However, Oktar remains a popular figure in Turkey, and enjoys support from a number of leading AKP politicians. His influence is far-reaching: Jewish media around the world have promoted his work, and his writings can be found in Islamic bookshops throughout Europe.

²⁶⁶ http://standforpeace.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/complete_works_of_Harun_Yahya.pdf

²⁶⁷ <http://en.a9.com.tr/showdetails.php?id=24&v=156999>

²⁶⁸ 'Countering Terror', *The Times*, 19 January 2013

Meanwhile, media outlets such as *The Jewish Press*, desperate for any figure that, at first glance, appears to be moderate, have embraced Oktar as the great moderate. In doing so, they have sanitised Oktar's extremist views. By embracing such demagogues, Jewish media betray the efforts made by genuine Muslim interfaith advocates, and run the risk of promoting Turkish Islamism - along with all its conspiracy and anti-Semitism - as the future of interfaith relations.

As with European Islamists in Europe who refuse to enter into dialogue with Ahmaddiya Muslims, some Middle Eastern Islamists repudiate dialogue with Jews while promoting engagement with Christians and other religious groups. Muslim Brotherhood groups in the Middle East, for example, are at the forefront of interfaith activities. These dialogue efforts tend, however, to be more open about their hostility towards Jews. According to Qatari media, Yusuf Al Qaradawi, the Muslim Brotherhood's spiritual leader, recently refused to take part in an interfaith conference because he would "never sit with a Jew on one platform".²⁶⁹

The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt itself has established a number of interfaith initiatives. The Cairo-based International Islamic Forum for Dialogue, for instance, promotes dialogue between Muslims and Christians. But, as its president Hamid bin Ahmed Al-Rifaie has stated, there can be no dialogue with Jewish groups:

"There is no dialogue with those who go against the least standards of respect for human dignity and the values of safe human co-existence ... This excludes those among them who resent the values of dialogue, and of course, such is the habit of most Jews, who insist today on pursuing the policies of conflict, violation of man's dignity and suppression of his rights and factors of his existence in order to achieve the vagaries and ambitions of international Zionism. ...there is only one dialogue language that the Jews understand and insist on adopting as a code of life, i. e. the language of rifles, rocket launchers and any means that could help them perpetrate tyranny and mischief in the land... This of course, legally and customarily, requires that we deal with them reciprocally..."²⁷⁰

Al-Rifaie does believe, however, that dialogue with Christians, and even "secularists", is worthwhile. He explains:

"...there is no doubt that, tackling general worldly matters during the process of dialogue avails each party the opportunity of presenting its values and principles in their regard so as to achieve the best for all. It also avails the practical opportunity of introducing the eternal Islamic values and principles..."²⁷¹

Al-Rifaie further adds that interfaith dialogue is a means of proselytisation for Islamist supremacy, declaring that the aim of dialogue is "executing...[a Muslim's] duty of propagation to the path of Allah", and that one "must not confine the benefits of dialogue within the maximum goal of dialogue manifested in accepting and embracing Islam. Although this goal exists in our souls, since we are ordered to invite and incite people to it, the issue as is well known has connection to the will of Allah Almighty and His guidance."²⁷²

²⁶⁹ http://archive.adl.org/PresRele/ASInt_13/5600_13.htm

²⁷⁰ <http://web.archive.org/web/20120304095126/http://www.dialogueonline.org/pressinterview.htm>

²⁷¹ *ibid.*

²⁷² <http://web.archive.org/web/20120304095126/http://www.dialogueonline.org/pressinterview.htm>

Or, as British Islamist preacher Haitham Al-Haddad has more plainly stated:

“Of course, as Muslims, we believe that this co-existence cannot take place unless they are living under the umbrella of al-Islam, under the system of al-Islam. ...we have to differentiate between a situation of a necessity that we are dealing with and the ultimate aim in an ideal situation.

Now we are talking about minorities living in the West so we have to provide them with workable solutions in the short run. And as we said, these visions and strategies are meant to be for a short run, means within fifty years, something like this.

It is not the far ultimate aim of Muslims because the far ultimate aim for Muslims is to have Islam governing the whole world, Islamisation of the whole globe. This is the ultimate aim of any Muslim and of all communities, Muslim communities.

But we are not talking about that at the moment, we are talking about the immediate goals. So, in terms of immediate goals we need this peaceful co-existence and they claim that they are promoting it and we need to take it from there.”²⁷³

Haddad, who describes Jews as “apes and pigs”,²⁷⁴ has further clarified his position by stating that ultimately, “peaceful co-existence is just full stop wrong.”²⁷⁵

Why, though, do some Islamist groups and individuals practice interfaith dialogue while others reject it, whether in part or entirely? The answer lies with Islamist groups’ approach to modernity — that is, to what extent can Western ideas be adopted and exploited in order to promote the Islamic ideal?

One might also ask, for example, why some Islamist groups produce music as propaganda, while others forbid it completely; or why some Western Islamist groups will use democratic processes, such as libel laws, to attack their critics, while others regard such means as sinful.

In the West, both Jamaat-e-Islami and the Muslim Brotherhood are thoroughly ‘modern’ groups, who are prepared to use all means to spread their message and recruit others to their cause. In the late 1990s, US law enforcement uncovered documents which revealed a complex mass of Muslim Brotherhood front-groups established within existing American political and charitable networks. John Ware, an investigative reporter, has noted that, “The documents revealed a clear understanding of American culture and political structures and how these could be exploited, to establish what, in essence, was an Islamic beachhead.”

A memorandum from a US Muslim Brotherhood leader declared:

“The Ikhwan [Muslim Brotherhood] must understand that their work in America is a kind of grand Jihad in eliminating and destroying the Western

²⁷³ http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R9OqYILtYiY&feature=player_embedded

²⁷⁴ <http://www.alminbar.net/alkhutab/khutbaa.asp?mediaURL=4359>

²⁷⁵ http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=8bXGs5bZ67k

civilisation from within and 'sabotaging' its miserable house by their hands and the hands of the believers so that it is eliminated and God's religion is made victorious over all other religions."²⁷⁶

The funding of interfaith dialogue also constitutes part of Iran's attempts to influence public opinion in the West. The Alavi Foundation, for example, has granted hundreds of thousands of dollars to interfaith programmes across the USA.²⁷⁷ The foundation is the successor organisation to the Pahlavi Foundation, which was established by the late Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi to "advance Iran's charitable interests in America". After the revolution in 1979, Iran's Islamist leaders took over the charity's work and assets.²⁷⁸

Federal prosecutors believe the foundation is a front for the Iranian government,²⁷⁹ and that it transfers its income to Iran's Bank Melli, which was the target of US sanctions in 2007 because of its role in the development of Iran's nuclear programme.

As another example: the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), a Muslim Brotherhood front-group and an unindicted co-conspirator in the Holy Land terrorism-financing trial, runs a considerable number of interfaith initiatives. Sayyid Syeed, founder of ISNA and its secretary-general from 1994 to 2006, is the coordinator for these initiatives. Syeed has stated that, "Our job is to change the constitution of America."²⁸⁰

ISNA was named in a May 1991 Muslim Brotherhood document - entitled 'An Explanatory Memorandum on the General Strategic Goal for the Group in North America' - as one of the "organisations of our friends".²⁸¹ Despite ISNA's connections to the Muslim Brotherhood, White House officials have spoken at ISNA's events. ISNA's leader was even appointed to the Department of Homeland Security's Countering Violent Extremism Working Group.²⁸²

The employment of interfaith does not just afford moral legitimacy to extremist groups; it also offers the possibility of political influence. Interfaith initiatives sometimes empower groups previously rebuffed by Government, such as the Muslim Council of Britain, with influence upon policy makers.

Moreover, Western governments, although cognizant of 'soft' Islamist methods, choose, on occasion, to elevate Brotherhood and Jamaat-e-Islami groups to positions of influence because certain policy makers believe this will blunt the impact of more overtly pro-terror groups. In 2004, for example, the jihadist Abu Hamza was arrested on terrorism charges. Hamza was the Imam at Finsbury Park Mosque, where at least 35 of Guantanamo detainees had passed through the Mosque while he was in charge.²⁸³

Following his arrest, the British Government passed control of the mosque to the Muslim

²⁷⁶ An Explanatory Memorandum on the General Strategic Goal for the Group in North America, Mohamed Akram, 22 May 1991. <http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/misc/20.pdf>

See also: <http://standpointmag.co.uk/node/5082/full>

²⁷⁷ <http://www.payvand.com/news/02/dec/1097.html>

²⁷⁸ 'What's known about Iran-linked Alavi Foundation?', Michael Farrell, Christian Science Monitor, 14 November 2009

²⁷⁹ *ibid.*

²⁸⁰ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JSUrAY9cNZ4>

²⁸¹ <http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/misc/20.pdf>

²⁸² http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/hsac_cve_working_group_recommendations.pdf

²⁸³ <http://www.aawsat.net/2013/04/article55298325>

Association of Britain (MAB). The MAB is one of the most notorious Muslim Brotherhood fronts in Britain. Its founder, Kemal Helbawi, has said,

“Oh honoured brothers, the Palestinian cause is not a struggle on borders or on land only. Rather, it is an absolute clash of civilisations: a satanic programme led by the Jews and those who support them and a divine programme carried by Hamas and the Islamic Movement in particular and the Islamic peoples in general.”²⁸⁴

One of the MAB-appointed directors of the mosque is now Mohammed Sawalha,²⁸⁵ a Hamas official described by a Brotherhood website as being “responsible for the political unit of the international Muslim Brotherhood in the UK.”²⁸⁶

Since the MAB took charge, the mosque has launched a series of interfaith initiatives, working closely with local government and police.²⁸⁷ Despite this proclaimed embrace of moderation, the mosque has continued to provide a platform for hate preachers.²⁸⁸ Unlike Abu Hamza’s stewardship, however, the corollary of all the interfaith initiatives and careful collaboration with government is that little attention is paid to the actual workings of the mosque.

A public expression of commitment to interfaith dialogue, it appears, can help legitimise any group as a moral voice and valued representative of religious communities. The employment of interfaith, in fact, compliments the Islamist concept of *da’wah* [outreach; literally: a call to God], such as providing social activities and services at a grassroots level, designed “to reshape the political consciousness of educated youth”.²⁸⁹

The Muslim Brotherhood’s spiritual leader Yusuf Qaradawi has declared, “Islam will come back to Europe for the third time” This “conquest” will not be “through the sword, but through Da’wah.”

Da’wah has become a tool used by Islamists to legitimise their rule, justify their mandate, and radicalise and recruit Muslim youth. In places such Gaza, through the provision of social services -- food for the hungry, care for the elderly and medicine for the sick – Islamist groups have afforded moral legitimacy to their terror activities.

In the West, although *da’wah* is not used by Muslim Brotherhood and Jamaat-e-Islami groups to justify terrorism, it is employed to propagate Islamist ideals and encourage others to regard Islamist groups as representative of Muslim communities. Interfaith has become part of Islamist groups’ efforts to project soft power — it offers Muslim Brotherhood and Jamaat-e-Islami groups a chance to promote politicized Islam as a powerful political force. Other interfaith leaders, meanwhile, tolerate these fundamentalists in order to preserve the interfaith ideal.

It is dangerous mistake for bona fide interfaith advocates, and government, to presume honourable activities only attract those with honourable intentions.

²⁸⁴ <http://standpointmag.co.uk/node/5082/full>

²⁸⁵ Ken Livingstone: I will make London a beacon of Islam, Andrew Gilligan, The Telegraph, 19 March 2012

²⁸⁶ ‘Time to Wise up to the Muslim Brotherhood’, John Ware, Standpoint, July 2013

²⁸⁷ <http://www.aawsat.net/2013/04/article55298325>

²⁸⁸ <http://hurryupharry.org/2010/07/20/finsbury-park-mosque-abdulmutalab-awlaki-link/>

²⁸⁹ Hamas: Politics, Charity, and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad, Matthew Levitt, Page 17: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2006

The exploitation of charitable ideas is certainly not an Islamist invention: for decades, while radical organisations such as the Socialist Workers Party have set out, as historian Tim Stanley notes, “...a stated policy of working in coalition with other groups”, their “strategy is actually entryism: get inside a larger movement, take over its organisational structure and transform the cause into its own.”²⁹⁰

The interfaith movement’s conviction that it is not a forum for dialogue, but that its work represents a singular, higher ideal, only serves to facilitate extremist groups’ attempts at infiltration. As one spokesperson for the St Philips Centre, an interfaith member body of the IFN, noted in response to an IFN survey: “Some people see ‘inter faith’, or ‘interfaith’, as a new theology like a pluralistic religion for the post-modern age.”²⁹¹

Leading interfaith groups now promote self-aggrandisement over practical inter-religious dialogue. The Three Faiths Forum, for example, has recommended that the Inter Faith Network become more centralised, and that groups that represent a single faith community should play a lesser role: “IFN feels bogged down by bureaucracy oftentimes. Some decisions should be voted on, but more should not. Also, Interfaith orgs should have more of a say than faith based orgs.”²⁹²

An alarming number of interfaith groups are controlled - or at best, influenced - by extremists and their apologists. Moreover, there are no studies to show that this vast taxpayer-funded industry has burnished the stain of religious fundamentalism. Despite the plethora of interfaith initiatives conducted by religious centres such as the East London Mosque, for instance, extremist preachers continue to promote hatred at the mosque every few months.

Dialogue is, self-evidently, not inherently bad. Candid discussion is the mark of civilised society. But, as with the collapse of all moral doctrines, it comes down to a problem of hypocrisy. Why do interfaith groups not question and challenge the extremist views promoted by some of their partners? Why do interfaith groups enter into dialogue with some groups but exclude the participation of others? Why does the type of dialogue practised by all these groups have no clearly defined purpose, save the preservation of the interfaith movements themselves?

If interfaith is not intended, as groups such as FOSIS suggest, to identify and stop the hatred that keeps different faith communities apart, then one of the only practical consequences of the present state of interfaith dialogue appears to be the legitimacy it affords to itself and to extremist groups, who hide behind the sanitising shield of a commitment to “dialogue”, while their real agenda lies unchallenged.

Over the next decade, religious extremists will, undoubtedly, continue to foster violence and hatred in Britain. It is alarming, then, that the proposed solution to such intolerance and bloodshed should be delegated to taxpayer-funded interfaith networks partly governed by the extremists themselves; and defended by interfaith industry lobbyists whose religious devotion to the interfaith ideal leaves them blind to the ideological intolerance that blights their movement.

²⁹⁰ ‘The SWP’s fanatics have outdone themselves with their ‘Margaret Thatcher is dead: rejoice’ cover’, Tim Stanley, The Telegraph, 9 April 2013

²⁹¹ ‘Report and Recommendations to the Inter Faith Network for the UK’, Strategic Review Working Group, Inter Faith Network, Page 19

²⁹² ‘Report and Recommendations to the Inter Faith Network for the UK’, Strategic Review Working Group, Inter Faith Network, Page 26

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