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Sir Bob Russell MP  
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Monday 8 July 2013

Dear Sir Bob,

We hope you will excuse this belated letter but we wanted to convey our thanks for your question to the Secretary of State for Defence concerning guidance on membership of the English Defence League by HM Armed Forces (Hansard, 11 June 2013).

As you will no doubt be aware, there have been several cases of participation in EDL activities by serving soldiers that have prompted MoD investigations. The cynical use of the Armed Forces and the charity, Help for Heroes, by the English Defence League in the aftermath of the murder of Drummer Lee Rigby in Woolwich, has further heightened fears of personnel being drawn into the racist, anti-Muslim rhetoric of the far right social movement.

Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe, Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police Service, confirmed last week that anti-Muslim hate crimes in the capital had increased eightfold in the two weeks following Drummer Lee Rigby's death.

It is in light of this disturbing revelation and the divisive demeanour and tactics of the English Defence League that we welcomed your parliamentary question and the response given by the Minister, Mark Francois.

Yours sincerely,

Sir Iqbal Sacranie,  
Trustee, ENGAGE