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Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> November 2012

Dear Canon Hocknull,

It is with great interest that we read in the Church of England newspaper of your recent blog postings and series on free speech.

As you rightly mention, it is a topic that has attracted much media attention in recent weeks, and has in fact rarely been out of the news when presented in the context of religion, blasphemy and the 'sensibilities' of people of faith.

We wanted to write to thank you for your thoughtful contributions and for reminding your readers of the conditions civil society places on the exercise of 'free speech'. As well as the responsibility to be exercised by those who want to cultivate a 'civil' discourse between co-citizens.

Your observation that the short, inflammatory and highly distasteful YouTube trailer, Innocence of Muslims "was never intended to promote dialogue, it was only ever intended to mock and offend," is precisely how many Muslims in the UK and around the world view the matter. It is of some comfort to us that those of other religious traditions recognise the harm and offence caused by gratuitously provocative material. Your recollection of Mill's 'harm principle' is apposite as is your argument in support of the need for all people to "recognise the humanity of other human beings and don't treat them in ways we ourselves are not willing to accept in return".

There has been much storm and controversy aroused by the fateful video trailer and it is reassuring to us to find amidst the copious volume of commentary it has attracted, pensive and persuasive observations such as your own.

Yours sincerely,

Shenaz Bunglawala