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The Rt. Hon. Ed Miliband MP,
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Wednesday 20th June 2012

Dear Mr Miliband,

We are writing in relation to an event that was hosted in the House of Commons and organised by the Henry Jackson Society (HJS), 'UNRWA & the Right of Return: The Palestinian Refugees and Prospects for Peace Between Israelis and Palestinians,' on Monday 18th June.

It would appear from the notice sent out by HJS that the event was hosted by the Labour MP for Liverpool Riverside, Louise Ellman.

The invited speaker was Asaf Romirowsky, whom the HJS advertise as being an Adjunct Scholar at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies and the Middle East Forum (MEF).

The Middle East Forum is a Philadelphia-based think tank notorious for the spread of Islamophobia in the US. The president of the MEF, Daniel Pipes, is profiled in the report Fear Inc., (2011) by the Center for American Progress, as one of five leading 'Islamophobia misinformation experts' in the US.

The MEF is involved with a number of questionable activities, including 'Campus Watch,' 'Islamist Watch,' and the 'Legal Project.' Each of these are websites dedicated to monitoring the activities of academics, scholars, lawyers, students, and individuals whose ideological stances differ from those of the MEF, according to the Fear Inc. report. The report further notes that the work of the MEF was cited 18 times by Anders Behring Breivik in his 'manifesto' prior to the murders he committed in Utoya and Oslo, Norway, last year.

Pipes also featured in the Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR) publication, 'Smearcasting: How Islamophobes spread fear, bigotry and misinformation,' as one of the 'dirty dozen' in their 'Who's Who Among America's Leading Islamophobes'.

FAIR in its report on the 'dirty dozen' reiterates some of the views espoused by Daniel Pipes in his various comment pieces for national and regional papers in America. The report observes Pipes to be a 'defender of racial profiling of Arab-Americans' claiming that he has in the past warned that "the presence, and increased stature, and affluence, and enfranchisement of American Muslims" entail "true dangers" for American Jews."

The FAIR report further observes Pipes' views on European Muslim communities thus:

"Western European societies are unprepared for the massive immigration of brown-skinned peoples cooking strange foods and maintaining different standards of hygiene.... All immigrants bring exotic customs and attitudes, but Muslim customs are more troublesome than most."

It is a matter of deep concern that a Labour MP should consider it prudent to host in Parliament an official linked to the Middle East Forum given what we know of the organisation's, and its president's, contributions to fomenting and encouraging anti-Muslim bias and prejudice in the US.

British Muslims are keenly aware of the use made by far-right social movements of incendiary opinions and commentary on Islam and Muslims. The English Defence League and British National Party are potent examples of how ideas such as those espoused by the MEF president, Daniel Pipes, are popularised to detrimental effect on Muslims.

At a time when the Labour Party is reviewing its connections to grassroots Muslim communities, following the Bradford general and local election results, it would appear to us a matter of bewilderment that a Labour MP agreed to host this event.

Your recent visit to Bradford and willingness to engage with local communities is a laudable reflection of your eagerness to understand and address the concerns of Muslim voters. Indeed, the Labour Party's record on creating the legislative and socio-economic conditions for a fair society, one in which racial and religious groups are protected against prejudice and discrimination, is a commendable one. One need only refer to the Equality Act 2010. We take this opportunity to restate our readiness to work with you and the Labour Party for a society in which all groups, racial and religious, enjoy freedom, equality and dignity.

Yours sincerely,

Shenaz Bunglawala
Head of Research