

A Response to Dominic Kennedy

On the 10th April 2017, Dominic Kennedy wrote a number of articles in The Times which made reference to MEND and some of its staff. MEND believes his articles are politically motivated and contain a series of factually incorrect statements and purposefully misleading insinuations which grossly misrepresented statements made by MEND staff. We present below a response to his comments and set the record straight on his unfounded allegations.

Key Allegations

There are several key areas within Kennedy's article that we wish to address and refute:

- Kennedy's association of the iAM logo with Islamic State's logo
- His insinuation that the Shadow Justice Minister was approached by MEND with the offer of funding to influence her position on issues of counter-terrorism.
- His misrepresentation of MEND's rebranding from iENGAGE and APPG 'concerns about extremism'.
- His representation of MEND and Prevent
- His reference to "conspiracy, antisemitism, hatred of other communities and a unipolar view of life."
- Kennedy's comments on MEND's founder
- His reference to alleged concern surrounding MEND's influence
- His deliberate demonising of Azad Ali

This document covers the following:

1. MEND: the organisation
2. Kennedy's crusade against Azad Ali
3. Kennedy's attacks on MEND

Dominic Kennedy is an example of individuals and organisations that deliberately distort and obfuscate the voices of Muslims. He has made a professional name for himself through consciously manufacturing and exploiting fears of Islam, in a manner that is wholly irresponsible, unethical and malicious.

Dominic Kennedy belongs to a cadre of individuals that profit from what we can call 'professional Islamophobia'. They achieve this through their access to powerful media and/or political platforms from which they proffer discourses of hate and work to exacerbate public anxieties towards minority communities in general, and Muslims in particular. Nathan Lean terms this the "Islamophobia Industry".

A dossier has been compiled on Kennedy highlighting serious concerns over potentially anti-Semitic, racist, homophobic and Islamophobic comments, tweets and more by Kennedy. The document (which is not the work of MEND) has can be viewed at www.mend.org.uk/dominic-kennedy-exposed

1. MEND: The Organisation

MEND was formed with the purpose of tackling Islamophobia through research, advocacy and community development. By empowering British Muslims to engage more effectively in media and politics, we hope to address disaffection and alienation among British Muslims and inspire members of Muslim communities to play full and active roles as British citizens. We have achieved a considerable amount in its short lifespan and have had much success in engaging Muslims in the political process. An indication of its achievements to date are listed below. **MEND's work has been commended by the World Economic Forum, EU's Parliament magazine and The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights too.**

Despite our impressive track record and considerable grassroots support, we have been regularly targeted by neo-cons and the pro-Israeli lobby whose '[Cold War on British Muslims](#)' has been dissected by Spinwatch in their analysis of the impact of strategies to exclude politically engaged Muslims from politics and the public sphere.

In a few short years, MEND's remarkable achievement as follows:

Advocacy

- **Media monitoring** – over 4,000 articles uploaded covering media and policy issues pertaining to British Muslims. We have ascertained numerous corrections and/or apologies from papers inclosing The Sun's infamous '1 in 5 British Muslims support Jihadism' headline.
- **Social media** – Over 45,000 Facebook and Twitter gained in a short period.
- **Party Conferences and Parliament events** – MEND has regularly held fringe events all mainstream Parties' conferences as well as numerous events in Parliament. Speakers at our events include the Home Secretary Amber Rudd, Andy Burnham, Wes Streeting, Jack Straw, Simon Hughes, Baroness Warsi, Sir Lynton Crosby and many more.
- **Leveson Inquiry** – the only British Muslim organization to give oral evidence at the Leveson Inquiry on the Culture, Practice and Ethics of the Press
- **Briefing papers and consultations** – authored over a dozen high-quality policy briefing and consultation papers on subjects such as counter terrorism, 'stop and search', Palestine 194, press regulation and reform among other topics.
- **Crown Prosecution Service** – MEND sits on the CPS Community Accountability Forum hate crime sub-panel
- **Global Recognition in documenting Islamophobia** - The WEF has highlighted MEND's work as best practice in 'human rights protection and promotion'. The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights has upheld MEND's work on recording Islamophobia as an example for civil society organisations in the region.
- **Electoral Commission** – The Electoral Commission is partnering with MEND (among other British Muslim organisations) to improve voter registration among BME voters.
- **Cited in numerous parliamentary reports** – our work has been recognised in a number of reports published by select committees including the Lords
- **APPG on Islamophobia** – we were instrumental in the creation of the first ever All Party Parliamentary Group on Islamophobia

Community Development and Engagement

- **Major Grass roots Muslim presence** – In over 25 UK towns and cities, MEND is working with British Muslims to tackle Islamophobia and play a more active role in media and politics in order to enhance civic engagement and social cohesion.
- **Master Classes and presentations** – MEND has designed a series of complementary courses designed to help Muslims better engage with the media and political institutions. Over 30,000 people have sat through our ‘Islamophobia – causes and cures’ presentation whilst over 3,000 have attended our media/politics masterclasses.
- **Police and Crime Commissioners** – successfully lobbied for Islamophobia to be recorded as a separate category of crime by Police Forces. The change came into effect on 1st April 2016. MEND works with over 20 police forces across the UK
- **Local Councils** – MEND has worked with numerous local councils across the UK to incorporate ‘tackling Islamophobia’ as part of their hate crime strategy
- **Schools** – Teachers across the UK deliver PSHE sessions on Islamophobia using MEND’s content for Schools.
- **Resources** – MEND has developed a wide range of accessible and practical resources from media toolkits to exhibitions and easy read guides, all designed to help British Muslims play more active citizenship roles.
- **Get Out and Vote** – Every major election, MEND runs a dedicated campaign to support Muslim political participation.

Our record of work and achievement clearly highlights our ethos of celebrating British Muslim identity and improving the civic engagement of British Muslims in politics and public life. We firmly believe that it is through meaningful engagement in media and politics and by tackling Islamophobia that we can successfully counter the extremists' narrative which rests on the 'clash of civilisations' thesis. We know the majority of British Muslims have no truck with the idea of a 'clash of civilisations'. We also know that British Muslims feel a sense of alienation and wide scale prejudice against their religion.

MEND is a vehicle to challenge these frustrations by empowering Muslims to engage in society, media and politics in order to change things for the better whether this be tackling misrepresentations of Islam and Muslims in the British press or counter- terrorism policies which dangerously curtail civil liberties.

2. Kennedy's demonising of Azad Ali

“An Islamic extremist who supported the killing of British soldiers has been made a director of a Muslim pressure group with influence over parliament and the police...”

He previously lost a libel battle with newspapers that said he was ‘a hardline Islamic extremist who supports the killing of British and American soldiers in Iraq by fellow Muslims as justified’.”

Azad Ali has been involved in social activism through involvement in a range of British Muslim organisations for over 25 years. He has provided vital support and platforms for dialogue with Muslim communities for a variety of statutory and law enforcement agencies including the Metropolitan Police Service and the Civil Service.

Despite his years of positive intervention in the area of interfaith dialogue and Muslim engagement in public life, Ali has been repeatedly victimised by certain journalists and bloggers with accusations of ‘extremism’ surfacing in a number of interlinked blogposts and newspaper articles.

A good portion of the negative commentary is based on a blog, 'Between the Lines' that Ali contributed to and which was run by the Islamic Forum Europe, one of several British Muslim organisations to which he has been affiliated. The blog is no longer active but selective quotes have been published on a Wikipedia page dedicated to Mr Ali, which serve to misrepresent what he has actually said.

In an article published by the *Mail on Sunday* on 18 January 2009, extracts from one of the blog entries by Ali on the concept of 'jihad' in Islam and reflections on the writings and statements of Islamic scholars on the subject, were used to suggest he supported the view that *"killing British troops in Iraq is justified"*.

Ali proceeded to sue the newspaper for libel. In his judgment, Mr Justice Eady acknowledged that the arguments advanced by Ali's lawyers, that the newspapers selectively quoted from the blog entries to misrepresent the thrust of his argument and wilfully ignored a large body of other content that dispelled the notion that Ali was a "hardline extremist" were "deserving of careful consideration".

Ali's defence pointed out that qualifying statements and commentary which contextualised Ali's blogs on the concept of jihad, on the distinction between combatant and non-combatants in war, and on Hamas and the Israeli occupation of Palestinian Territories were deliberately omitted to suit the newspaper's preconceived idea that Ali was an "extremist".

Furthermore, the newspaper failed to offer Ali a right of reply to the allegations before they were published in the Sunday paper.

The subsequent accusations have centred upon Mr Justice Eady's judgment that Ali's blogs could be construed as "taking the position that the killing of American and British troops in Iraq would be justified."

Detractors insistent on portraying Ali as "hardline" and an "extremist" have resorted to regular references to Mr Justice's Eady's remarks without noting them in their entirety, that is, that Ali's claims that the Mail on Sunday had deliberately misrepresented his blog entries and selectively quoted from them were "deserving of careful consideration".

Ali was unable to appeal against the decision due to financial constraints. He has therefore been unable to further the opportunity of "careful consideration" of his blogs in a bid to clear his name. Therefore, what Ali's case actually represents is the dire need for the full implementation of the Leveson press regulation recommendations through Section 40. Without the access to the low cost arbitration enshrined in Section 40, innocent victims of journalistic manipulation are severely limited

in their capacity to challenge damaging and undeserved labels that may forever affect their personal and professional lives.

Like Kennedy, exactly the same accusations were made back in 2015 by Andrew Gilligan. In responding to these repeated accusations, Ali stated:

"I have never called for the killing of British troops. I challenge anyone to produce the evidence that suggests I have uttered any such words. What is used to smear me is the fact that I quoted from Abdullah Azzam's son in a reference to the Iraq war and the resistance to the Allied attack against Saddam Hussein. He said: "If I saw an American or British man wearing a soldier's uniform inside Iraq I would kill him because that is my obligation. If I found the same soldier over the border in Jordan I wouldn't touch him. In Iraq he is a fighter and an occupier, here he is not. This is my religion and I respect this as the main instruction in my religion for jihad." The Irish Times - <http://www.irishtimes.com/news/the-son-of-the-father-of-jihad-1.1027271>

Compare this his original statement as found in the Irish Times to what Andrew Gilligan writes "If I saw an American or British man wearing a soldier's uniform inside Iraq, I would kill him because that is my obligation ... I respect this as the main instruction in my religion for jihad." He completely misrepresents the statement and the point I was making in my article about war, the concept of the 'theatre of war' and combatants and non-combatants. I was making no such claims to the legitimate targeting of British soldiers. Nor was I defending, in citing from Abdullah Azzam's son's comments, the killing of British troops in Iraq. Again, this is another tedious act of smearing by association, in this case by quoting someone without a disclaimer but perhaps Mary Fitzgerald, who wrote the article for the Irish Times, is saved from having to offer such a disclaimer because she isn't a Muslim?"

"Azad Ali has publicly denied that Khalid Masood's attack on Westminster last month, in which the Muslim convert murdered a policeman and four pedestrians, was terrorism. He described it as a lone-wolf act..."

Mr Ali objected to ministers seeking help from technology companies after it was reported that Masood used the WhatsApp messaging service two minutes before driving into 50 people on Westminster Bridge. "Look at the Govt trying to invade more of our privacy," he complained to his followers."

As is the case with many of Kennedy's accusations, his quotes in regard to Azad Ali's Facebook posts were highly selective and purposefully mischaracterised Ali's position. The comments that Ali made (like any statements on any sensitive subject) must be read in the context of the posts as a whole. Mr Ali was commenting on the possibility of the Government seeking further investigatory powers into individuals' private communications on the basis of suspicion that Mr Masood was part of a wider terrorist network. In this respect, Mr Ali was obviously referring to terrorism in the sense of organised acts coordinated by terrorist groups, which the Metropolitan Police appear to now also believe was not the case with the Westminster atrocity.¹

Regardless of labels, both Azad Ali and MEND have always unequivocally condemned the Westminster atrocity as a barbarous and cruel act of murder, for which there can be no possible justification of mitigation.

Indeed, MEND was responsible for organising unity vigils at twelve separate cities across the UK following the atrocity. As such, Kennedy's implication that Mr Ali, and by association MEND itself, downplay the barbarity of the Westminster attack is a wilful distortion of the facts.

¹ Ewen MacAskill, "Westminster attacker acted alone and motive may never be known, say police," The Observer, March 25, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/mar/25/westminster-attack-khalid-masoon-acted-alone>.

Over a week before Kennedy published his article, MEND wrote to him to remind him of these facts – including the Unity Vigil - and yet, Kennedy chose to completely ignore them so that he could continue to promote his own malevolent distortion of Mr Ali’s character and undeservedly vilify Mend in the process.

“Mend’s tone is partly set by its community chief, Azad Ali, who spoke at an event run by the group Cage — which described the Islamic State beheader known as Jihadi John as a “beautiful young man.”

To accuse someone of supporting another’s views purely on the basis of locational proximity is counter-intuitive and reckless. Many of the events and platforms on which Mend volunteers, staff and representatives speak are very large events with many hundreds of participants and speakers. We, like any other speaker at these events, are not in control of who else may or may not be invited by the organisers nor what they may or may not say. Locational proximity is not an endorsement, as we are sure that Mr Kennedy must be aware.

We do not agree or support the aforementioned comments made about Mohammed Amwaza aka ‘Jihadi John’.

3. Kennedy's Attacks on MEND

a) Kennedy's association of iAM logo with Islamic State's.

"Muslim Engagement and Development (Mend), which uses a logo similar to the jihadist hand signal adopted by Islamic State, works with politicians, police and prosecutors."

In this case, Kennedy is positioning incomplete facts in a manner that is intended to create an entirely false image. Firstly, the logo that Kennedy is referring to is not the logo of MEND itself, but rather the logo of Islamophobia Awareness Month; a campaign that is run and supported by MEND, as well as various other Muslim and non-Muslim organisations including Lords, MPs, politicians, church groups and police constabularies.



Secondly, Islamophobia Awareness Month ([IAM](#)) has been running in the UK since 2012 and predates the emergence of Da'esh (sometimes referred to as Islamic State). IAM plays a vital role in highlighting the many positive contributions of British Muslims alongside exhibiting the scale of Islamophobia in the UK.

Finally, it is important to mention that the sign of the index finger being raised has been used universally by Muslims around the world for hundreds of years to signify the oneness of God (Allah means one god in Arabic). Any attempt to construe it as being the 'logo of Islamic State' is wilfully misleading.



As the above pictures demonstrate, it is a ludicrous accusation to link anyone who uses an index finger with Da'esh.

Needless to say, MEND totally abhors the murderous cult of Da'esh and argues that their actions have no place in Islam.

b) Kennedy implied that the Shadow Justice Minister was approached by MEND with the offer of funding to influence her position on issues of counter-terrorism.

"Yasmin Qureshi, the shadow justice minister, accepted £5,000 from Sufyan Ismail, the founder of Mend, without identifying him as her donor."

"A week later, a bill had its second reading, proposing a duty for public authorities to report concerns about people at risk of extremism. Ms Qureshi criticised Prevent in the Commons for the first time."

Any remote insinuation that a donation by Mr Ismail would have influenced Yasmin Qureshi's voting direction on PREVENT is shown to be totally lacking in credibility when one sees that Yasmin voted IN FAVOUR of the PREVENT legislation which would be clearly AGAINST Mr Ismail's wishes. It's unclear what Dominic Kennedy's shoddy journalism is trying to prove here, but it seems like the usual smoke and mirrors tactics used by the right-wing neo-con movement.

Prior to Kennedy publishing his article, Yasmin Qureshi wrote to him and stated:

"Civil liberties are a significant issue for my constituents and my parliamentary record shows that I have always opposed any measures that may undermine them. In your email you make reference to a

registered donation I received in November 2014. You insinuate that the concerns I raised regarding the Prevent strategy in December were related to that donation. The bizarre nature of this suggestion is apparent for the following reasons:

- 1. The first reading of the Counter Terrorism and Security Bill occurred on 26.11.14. I voiced my concerns about making Prevent statutory at the second reading 02.12.14. Your accusation that I took a 'sudden decision to inform parliament' of my criticism of Prevent is therefore baseless given that I took the earliest possible opportunity to do so. Moreover, my reservations regarding Prevent, even in its voluntary form, were well known prior to my entry into Parliament. They were raised many times, publically and professionally. For these reasons, any attempt to link my criticism of Prevent to the cited donation is beyond credible.*
- 2. The concerns I expressed over giving Prevent statutory status must be understood as part of my long standing opposition to measures that undermine civil liberties, such as rendition and the use of stop and search. My work on these issues long predates the donation you cite as the parliamentary record and articles in the press demonstrate. Furthermore, these issues are a fundamental concern for my constituents as the nature of much of my casework and the number of letters I received in relation to the Counter Terrorism and Security Bill confirm.*
- 3. At the final reading **I voted in favour** of the Counter Terrorism and Security Bill despite my reservations regarding the Prevent element it contained. This was not in line with the donor's wishes so any suggestion of undue influence is once again revealed as groundless.*

I will conclude by observing that the vague and peculiar nature of insinuations are exposed not only by their relation to facts listed above, but by their contradictory character. At times you suggest that the donation prompted my opposition to aspects of Prevent, at others you imply that I have always supported a more radical agenda than my actions and statements indicate. Clearly however both positions cannot obtain simultaneously and I reject your accusatory and logically unsound claims.

I have spent my career opposing both radicalisation and the infringement of civil liberties. Your suggestion that I could be influenced by a donation or that I have been concealing my true beliefs I regard as deeply insulting.

I expect any story on this matter which mentions me by name will include the response I have provided."

Kennedy did not include any part of Yasmin Qureshi's response, nor did he make any acknowledgement of a defence against such a highly offensive insinuation.

c) Kennedy's misrepresentation of MEND's rebranding from iENGAGE and APPG 'concerns about extremism'.

"Mend was was briefly chosen to provide secretarial services to the all-party parliamentary group on Islamophobia until MPs rejected it amid concerns about extremism. Mr Ismail relaunched the pressure group as Mend, which has been more successful at gaining influence."

The All Party Parliamentary Group on Islamophobia established in 2010 was marred by some controversy after a campaign was launched to deprive iENGAGE of the status of secretariat on the basis of a number of unfounded accusations. Kennedy claims in one of his articles that 'concerns about extremism' brought about the circumstances which resulted in MPs removal of us from the secretariat position, but this is wholly incorrect.

According to the Labour MP and APPG vice chair, Jack Straw, it was the Jewish Chronicle who waged the campaign to iENGAGE removed. Sir Peter Bottomley, who spoke in iENGAGE's defence during the APPG troubles and demanded that those who agitate against iENGAGE should recognise its work for what it is and "face their own demons".

Given its robust stance on the Palestinian right to sovereign statehood, criticism of the Conservatives' revision to universal jurisdiction law to protect foreign war criminals, including Israelis suspected of war crimes in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, from prosecution in British courts, and its questioning the teaching of the ideology of Zionism in British schools, it is perhaps not surprising that the Jewish Chronicle would use any and all leverage and influence it can to keep Muslims out of politics.

After a previously failed attempt to have iENGAGE removed from the APPG in January 2011, a group of MPs eventually succeeded in having it removed in July 2011. Indeed, the ousting was celebrated by the usual coterie of neo-con blogs – which gives firm indication of those with a vested interest in seeing it removed.

Kennedy's reference to supposed "concerns of extremism" is devoid of any evidentiary substance as he fails to offer a single piece of evidence to back up his claim.

d) Kennedy's representation of MEND and Prevent

"Mend campaigns to scrap Prevent, a government scheme that aims to stop people from becoming terrorists, using the hashtag #EndPrevent."

Kennedy's assertion that MEND campaigns to have the Prevent agenda scrapped is entirely accurate. While in no way an exhaustive list of the flaws within the Prevent strategy, MEND firmly believes that:

- The current PREVENT strategy *fundamentally flawed in theory and practice*
- It lacks empirical evidence to justify its focus upon religion and theology over more relevant and influential factors, such as socio-economic backgrounds and political disaffection.
- Prevent has caused widespread alienation and mistrust amongst Muslim communities by conflating religion with extremism and attempting to seemingly gather intelligence on Muslim communities through individuals embedded in local services.
- The strategy serves to create a 'pre-criminal space' wherein innocent individuals are treated with suspicion of probable crimes.
- The use of PREVENT within university settings is a curtailment of academic freedoms enshrined in the Education (No 2) Act 1986.
- Almost 70% of Channel referrals have been made through the education sector. Therefore, there are serious issues of teachers being turned into spies and the subsequent impact of schools compromising the learning environment.
- The fact that 80% of Channel referrals under the auspices of Prevent prove to be unwarranted is evidence of a strategy that serves to disproportionately stigmatize and victimize innocent individuals.

MEND is of course not alone in its criticism of PREVENT. Other critics include:

- The Home Affairs Select Committee
- The Former Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation, David Anderson QC²
- The National Union of Teachers³

² David Batty, "Prevent strategy 'sowing mistrust and fear in Muslim communities'" The Guardian, February 03, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/feb/03/prevent-strategy-sowing-mistrust-fear-muslim-communities>.

³ Richard Adams, "Teachers back motion calling for Prevent strategy to be scrapped," The Guardian, March 28, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/mar/28/teachers-nut-back-motion-calling-prevent-strategy-radicalisation-scrapped>.

- The Open Society Justice Initiative⁴
- Academics such as Karen Armstrong, Professor Noam Chomsky, Professor David Miller, Professor Arun Kundnani and Professor Tariq Ramadan.

e) Kennedy's reference to "conspiracy, antisemitism, hatred of other communities and a unipolar view of life."

"Mend was accused by Fiyaz Mughal, a prominent Muslim anti-hate crime campaigner, at the home affairs select committee's inquiry into hate crime of "conspiracy, antisemitism, hatred of other communities and a unipolar view of life".

The Board of Deputies of British Jews has written to the inquiry, saying that "the approach taken by Mend risks increasing hostility and suspicion between the Jewish and Muslim communities, rather than building trust and empathy". Mend has told the committee that it strongly denies antisemitism or supporting conspiracy theories."

What Kennedy fails to mention in this piece of reporting, is that Mr Mughal's statements were openly libellous accusations, however Mughal made them in Parliament meaning he was protected by Parliamentary privilege. Mughal has been challenged to repeat them outside Parliament and face the legal consequences, he has yet to muster the courage to do so. Suffice to say, Mughal's comments were untrue and unsubstantiated by facts.

"Conspiracy"

MEND have never supported "conspiracy" theories nor shown any sympathy for such theories. In written evidence submitted by the Community Security Trust (CST) to the Committee's inquiry into 'Countering Extremism', a paragraph referred to Tell MAMA and to MEND alleging the following:

*"MEND endorses the conspiracy theory that "Zionists" are partly responsible for encouraging anti-Muslim hatred."*⁵

We can only assume the CST's claim to loosely and erroneously refer to a tour we organised titled "The Five Pillars of Islamophobia". The tour featured academic research into the "pillars of Islamophobia" which was first presented at a conference hosted by the University of Bath in June 2015.⁶

The research clearly identifies "sections of the Zionist lobby" as responsible for supporting, and in some cases driving, Islamophobia in the UK, through overlapping networks and alliances.

Research by Professor David Miller, Dr Narzanin Massoumi, Dr Tom Mills and Hilary Aked, a doctoral student at the University of Bath, outlines these "five pillars". The authors argue: "*We will not turn back the tide of Islamophobia only by confronting the threat of UKIP in politics, or the EDL and other parts of the transnational 'counter-jihad movement' on the streets. We also need to focus our attention on elements of the (also transnational) neo-conservative and Zionist movements which provide information, 'research' and advocacy which can drag the state and politics to the right and sharpen Islamophobic policies...*"⁷

⁴ Ian Cobain, "UK's Prevent counter-radicalisation policy 'badly flawed'" The Guardian, October 18, 2016, accessed April 12, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/oct/19/uks-prevent-counter-radicalisation-policy-badly-flawed>.

⁵ "Written evidence - Community Security Trust," Home Affairs select committee inquiry on Countering Extremism, October 13, 2015, <http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/home-affairs-%20committee/countering-extremism/written/22384.html>.

⁶ David Miller, "The five pillars of Islamophobia," OpenDemocracy, June 07, 2015,

<https://www.opendemocracy.net/opensecurity/david-miller-tom-mills-hilary-aked-narzanin-massoumi/five-pillars-of-islamophobia>.

⁷ ibid.

In other research by Professor David Miller, Dr Tom Mills and Dr Tom Griffin, the work of three neo-conservative think tanks, the now-defunct Centre for Social Cohesion, Policy Exchange⁸ and the Henry Jackson Society (with Hilary Aked and Sarah Marusek),⁹ are examined. While both publications rigorously investigate reports published by these think tanks on topics related to British Muslims and their ideological underpinnings in cold war 'subversion' strategies, with the intended impact on Muslim communities being the cultivation of and support for a docile and apolitical British Muslim identity, the reports also illustrate the financial donors to the various groups and the affiliation of certain donors with Islamophobic enterprises or anti-Muslim views.

The empirical research supporting the identification of "sections of the Zionist lobby" as contributing to Islamophobic prejudice and policies is irrefutable and it is a slur against the rigour of research employed by these academics to glibly render this work a "conspiracy theory".

"Anti-Semitism"

MEND has at no time, willingly or unwittingly, been guilty of "anti-Semitism". It is inconceivable that we, as an organisation committed to fostering partnerships and collaborations with other groups in society to tackle all forms of hatred, would indulge in pernicious victimisation of Jewish people. The accusation is an abominable slur and we have previously stated that were it not for the power of absolute privilege which constrains our ability to meet this outrageous claim with firm legal action, we would engage it forthwith.

"Uni-polar view of life"

At the time that Mr Mughal made his comments, we did not fully comprehend the basis of this assertion and are still not sure what he meant by a "uni-polar view of life".

While the exact meaning of the phrase used here is not clear to us, we would vehemently dispute the suggestion our work raises obstacles to Muslim integration in British society. To the contrary, our initiatives and programmes are designed to promote full and active citizenship by British Muslims.

Our election manifestos, policy briefing papers, contributions to public consultations and community engagement and development activities, all are driven by our dedicated pursuit of the integration of British Muslim communities in all areas of life; social, political and economic.

f) Dr Siema Iqbal

"Siema Iqbal, a general practitioner who features on Mend's recruitment material with the slogan "I'm a Doctor BUT I also volunteer for Mend", wrote: "Tough call ... Would have to be Hopkins." Mr Ali replied: "lol and lol". Dr Iqbal and Mr Ali denied condoning violence."

Dr Iqbal responded to Kennedy's initial accusations before the article was published by stating: "*Retweets are not endorsements, and my views are my own, something which is plainly evident on my Twitter profile. I do not and have not advocated violence against anyone, male or female, and I never would. Any attempt to misrepresent me as advocating violence against women will be met with firm and immediate legal action by my lawyers.*" However, Kennedy chose to ignore Dr Iqbal's assertion that her comments were in no way a reflection of MEND and published them anyway.

g) Heena Khaled

"Heena Khaled, a Mend representative in the Waltham Forest area of east London, has tweeted imagery suggesting that Israelis consume human blood. She wrote: "They call us savages while they

⁸ Mills, T., Griffin, T. and Miller, D. (2011) *The Cold War on British Muslims: An examination of Policy Exchange and the Centre for Social Cohesion*. Public Interest Investigations.

⁹ Griffin, T., Aked, H., Miller, D. and Marusek, S. (2015). *The Henry Jackson Society and the Degeneration of British Neoconservatism: Liberal interventionism, Islamophobia and the 'War on Terror'*. Public Interest Investigations.

rip our flesh and drink our blood! #gaza #israel #zionist #iraq #afghanistan #syria #war #justice". When the US announced military aid to Israel, she tweeted: "To blood suck more Palestinians?" Ms Khaled's lawyers said she considered all antisemitism and prejudice as obscenities and neither tweet had mentioned Jews."

Heena Khaled would like to make the following clear:

"Firstly, the 'imagery' referred to was a tweet with no actual image from 20 November 2012, which Dominic fails to mention. It was made in response to an attack on Gaza by Israel, as reported by mainstream media outlets including the BBC,¹⁰ in which the BBC emphasised the severity of the attack by stating "Israel's aerial and naval bombardment of the Gaza Strip is its most intense assault on the Palestinian territory since it launched a full-scale invasion four years ago."

The tweet also refers to events taking place in Afghanistan, Syria and Iraq. Therefore, to suggest the case for blood libel by stating that the tweet suggested 'Israelis consume human blood', when there is no mention of Israeli people, nor exact reference to who "They" actually were in either tweet, is highly misrepresentative.

In any case, my social media space is personal and as stated on twitter 'Views expressed are my own' hence not a representation of MEND.

Accusations of antisemitism are very serious. As a Muslim activist working against islamophobia and religiously motivated hate crime, I would never tolerate the propagation of religious hatred against another person or community. Using these insinuations to smear Muslim activists is not only disrespectful to us, but also disrespectful to the Jewish community, as it delegitimises the cause and fight against antisemitism. It also sets up barriers at a time when we are trying to work together in our commitment to promoting an inclusive society which respects the fundamental rights and values of each other. These efforts are undermined by sensationalist and distorted media journalism, as is embodied in the articles of Dominic Kennedy."

h) Kennedy's comments on our Founder

"[Mr Ismail] has been caught on camera claiming that there had been an "Israeli lobby" in Britain for 300 years, and he later stepped down as the group's chief executive."

There are many issues inherent within this particular statement. Firstly, Kennedy uses the phrase "caught on camera". Far from being some sordid and underhand agenda that has been inadvertently and damagingly exposed, Mr Ismail's statements were public, knowingly recorded and posted online. In reality, Mr Ismail had given a public lecture at in Cheadle, during which time he openly discussed the issue of pro-Zionist influences over organisations that are intended (at least publically) to be tackling Islamophobia and other problems of anti-Muslim hate.

Secondly, and rather confusingly, Kennedy provides an un-contextualised statement as if it is inherently problematic, without any discussion as to why it is problematic. The insinuation, we assume, is that he is trying to promote is the popular conflation of anti-Zionism, or criticism of Israeli policies, with anti-Semitism. To be clear, criticism of Zionism or Israeli policies does not equate to criticism of Jews. MEND has not, and will not, tolerate anti-Semitism and considers it to be equally abhorrent as any form of racially or religiously motivated hate.

In reality, Mr Ismail's reasons for discussing the existence of pro-Zionist lobbies (lobbies which claim to tackle Islamophobia) was made clear at the time and in a subsequent blog post, in which Mr Ismail went to great pains to clarify the problems with sections of the Zionist lobby who (as previously mentioned) are responsible for supporting, and in some cases driving, Islamophobia in the UK, through overlapping networks and alliances. Mr Ismail's arguments were supported by academic

¹⁰ Yolande Knell, "Gaza crisis: Israel intensifies aerial attack," BBC News, November 16, 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-20351553>.

evidence that has been covered in our discussions of Mr Mughal's accusations of alleged 'conspiracy', and Mr Ismail's [blog](#) post.

Furthermore, in Kennedy's signature method of juxtaposing facts to give the impression that they are interrelated and damning, he finishes his statement by referring to Mr Ismail stepping down from his former position as CEO. The implication here is that Mr Ismail stepped down *as a result of* his statements in Cheadle.

Mr Ismail stepping down as CEO is a separate fact that is completely unrelated to his statements in Cheadle; to present them as interrelated is a wilful distortion. It had always been Mr Ismail's intention from day one to step down from his position once the organisation was viable and its future secure.

D) Concern surrounding Mend's influence

"Whitehall officials are concerned about Mend's influence with key elements of the establishment, including police forces, the Crown Prosecution Service, police and crime commissioners, councils, teachers and parliament..."

The pressure group Muslim Engagement and Development (Mend) is, however, increasingly being wooed by the establishment."

The fact that Kennedy chooses not to cite his sources is revealing. Surely, if a Whitehall official has concerns regarding the influence of a public organisation in such sensitive areas as the police force, CPS, PCC, councils, the education sector and parliament, they would have a public duty to openly raise and address these concerns. Refusing to reveal the source of such concerns can only be a symptom of an inability to legitimise such claims if they were to be made publically.

MEND's extraordinary growth and continued grass roots engagement within Muslim communities means that these very communities have preferred to work with MEND rather than state financed organisations. This is less of a problem for MEND and more for those who seek to navigate the discourse in the Muslim community to peddle their agendas.

Furthermore, there is a point here to be made about the fact that, if Muslim organisations or individuals do not engage enough, they can be accused of isolationism, separatism and a lack of integration. On the other hand, if they engage too much they can be accused of having a 'concerning influence'. It is a double sided criticism that is levied at Muslims purely on the basis of their religious identity and serves only to stigmatise all Muslim organisations who attempt to constructively engage with the 'establishment'