

MEND REBUTTALS TO ALL ALLEGATIONS



Muslim engagement
& development

mend

MEND rebuttals to all allegations

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Introducing Muslim Engagement and Development (MEND)

Our mission

Muslim Engagement and Development (MEND) is a community funded organisation that seeks to encourage political, civic and social engagement within British Muslim communities through empowering British Muslims to effectively interact with political and media institutions. We firmly believe that enhancing the mainstream participation of vulnerable and under-represented communities is an important step towards deepening and strengthening our democracy.

We attempt to achieve this in a variety of ways:

- MEND encourages voter registration and political engagement by British Muslims through our 'Get Out and Vote' campaign, providing educational workshops, and through hosting events – such as hustings and debates – that are intended to promote and facilitate participation in the political sphere.
- MEND provides educational courses and training designed to equip Muslims with the skills, resources and materials necessary to foster active citizenship and socio-political participation.
- MEND provides commentary and analysis on the high volumes of news content and coverage that maligns Islam and Muslims and foment Islamophobia in the UK and across Europe.
- MEND works with other Muslim and non-Muslim organisations to tackle Islamophobia and all forms of hatred, including anti-Semitism, homophobia, xenophobia, racism, and hatred based upon disability.
- MEND encourages greater participation by British Muslims in voluntary bodies and institutions in order to deepen democratic and civic engagement at the local level.

Who are MEND

Volunteers

The vast majority of MEND's grassroots work is achieved through a network of 26 working groups and a number of satellite groups across the UK. These working groups deliver MEND's national strategy on a local level through their work with delivery partners such as the police, councils, schools and inter-faith organisations, to name but a few.

What makes these working groups unique is that they are almost entirely comprised of local community volunteers. As such, working groups function on the basis of enthusiastic and dedicated individuals – almost none of whom are employees of MEND. Consequently, almost 1,000 people across the country freely give their time and expertise to MEND because they believe passionately in the causes and principles we espouse.

Our volunteers are drawn from a variety of different backgrounds and professions, including (but not limited to):

- GPs, hospital doctors, medical and non-medical NHS staff, and healthcare workers,
- Teachers,
- Solicitors,
- Academics,
- IT professionals,
- Businesswomen and Businessmen,
- Housewives and househusbands,
- Students.

Many of these volunteers also dedicate their time to other organisations and simultaneously fulfil other civic duties within the community, such as school governor work. Consequently, MEND volunteers are firmly located within the heart of their communities, and have important relationships with local councils, police forces and schools. Through their external community roles and responsibilities, MEND volunteers are often well-known and highly credible figures within their local communities, and thus provide MEND with significant local credibility.

It is through this network of volunteers that MEND can boast to be a truly grassroots organisation which is representative of a wide cross-section of British Muslims. As such, we reasonably believe that we are an organisation that should be consulted by politicians, policy makers and public bodies if they genuinely wish to engage with a representative cross-section of the British Muslim community.

Staff

In comparison to the hundreds of volunteers, MEND has a small number of staff. At present, MEND has 20 members of paid staff.

Amongst these employees, we have a network of regional managers who cover the different geographical areas of the UK. Typically, these regional managers support local working groups within their territories, and work closely with them to deliver the national strategy alongside local delivery partners.

MEND has a small centrally based team in London, comprising of administration staff, graphic designers and our Social Media Lead.

Finally, and also based in London, MEND has an advocacy team consisting of our Policy Team, a Parliamentary team, and our Islamophobia Response Unit Co-ordinators.

The Board

Sufyan Ismail, Founder

Sufyan Gulam Ismail is an award-winning serial entrepreneur and philanthropist who has been ranked amongst the 500 most influential Muslims in the World. He graduated from the

University of Manchester before starting his career training with Deloitte. Mr Ismail has built numerous businesses over the years, specialising in financial services, private equity and real estate. His businesses have won numerous awards including 'UK's fastest growing company', NW Entrepreneur of the Year, and have been listed in the Sunday Times Top 100 Fast Track corporate listings. His businesses have donated over £5m towards alleviating poverty in developing countries, supporting orphans and providing emergency medical relief in disaster zones. Mr Ismail has also authored various briefing papers and co-authored a university textbook on Islamic finance.

In 2014, Mr Ismail formally retired from full-time business activity to focus on philanthropic ventures with a key focus on tackling Islamophobia. To this end, he became the founder of MEND which specialises in tackling Islamophobia via a dual approach of advocacy in Westminster and media engagement, as well as through improving media and political literacy of grassroots British Muslims across the UK. Mr Ismail stepped down as CEO of MEND in 2015.

In recognition for his outstanding leadership and activism, Mr Ismail was recently awarded the Community Leadership Foundation award for tackling Islamophobia.

Dr Shazad Amin, CEO

Dr Shazad Amin is Chief Executive Officer of Muslim Engagement & Development

He qualified in Medicine from the University of Manchester in 1990 and spent 26 years working as a psychiatrist. He retired in 2017 from his post as a NHS Consultant in Adult Psychiatry based in Manchester, having spent 17 years in that position. He works as a Court Expert Witness, mainly in the area of Clinical Negligence. He is also a Chair of the Medical Practitioners Tribunal Service, which makes decisions about a doctors' fitness to practise. He is a Care Quality Commission Specialist Advisor.

He is married with three children and supports Liverpool FC. He also has interests in the art of MC Escher, optical illusions, 80s pop music and acting.

Aman Ali

Having spent two years as MEND's Regional Manager for London, Aman Ali is now MEND's National Community Head.

Aman currently is undertaking his Master's studies at UCL's Institute of Education, having initially graduated from Queen Mary University with a BSc in Biology with Psychology.

He has many years of experience working with various Muslim youth organisations, having started out as a Muslim youth worker at the age of 17. He then moved onto various roles including being previously Head of Media at FOSIS and teaching science at secondary level.

Isobel Ingham-Barrow

Isobel Ingham-Barrow is MEND's Head of Policy and Research.

Isobel received her BA (Hons) in Arabic and Middle Eastern Studies with Persian, an MA in Middle East and Islamic Studies, and an MRes in Middle East Studies from the University of Exeter. Alongside her work with MEND, she lectures at the University of Exeter and is a

postgraduate researcher in Area and Development Studies at the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies. Her PhD research project is an exploration of masculinity within British Muslim communities.

Our funding

MEND is entirely community financed and run. This is so that MEND may maintain its freedom from political and economic agendas, and thus fully represent the interests of British Muslims without any conflicts of interest. Our determination to remain fully community funded stems from experience of past organisations that have attempted to represent minority and vulnerable groups, but which have become restrained to working within government narratives due to their reliance upon government, or other similar sources of funding. To honestly represent any community, organisations must be able to criticise and debate freely for the benefit of those they claim to represent.

It is on account of this desire to independently represent the interest of vulnerable communities that MEND is proud of our community funded model. Our successful financial structure not only demonstrates our large grassroots support, but also our autonomy from political and economic narratives and agendas.

Our achievements

Global accolades and commendations

Through the course of our work, we have accumulated numerous global accolades and commendations, including:

- The World Economic Forum commended our work as *“best practice”* in Human Rights *“protection and promotion”*.
- The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights rated us the *“best example for civil society organisations”*.
- The EU Parliament Magazine stated that *“The EU could learn a lot from MEND’s work on counter-radicalisation through engagement”*.
- The Runnymede Trust in their 20th Anniversary report ‘Islamophobia – still a challenge for us all’ commented that *“MEND made an extremely comprehensive and compelling submission to the Leveson Inquiry into the culture, practices and ethics of the British Press”*.
- A number of politicians, officials and public personalities have spoken at many of our¹ events, including Home Secretary Amber Rudd, Jeremy Corbyn, Sir Lynton Crosby, Baroness Warsi, Andy Burnham, Diane Abbott, Sir Peter Bottomley, Jack Straw, Wes Streeting, Stephen Kinnock, James Caan, and many more.

Community recognition

MEND has the largest grassroots support and community recognition of any Muslim organisation in the UK. With over twenty-six working groups and close to 1,000 volunteers

¹ Or events that were joint hosted by MEND and other third-party organisations.

across the country, MEND can provide the Government and policy makers with greater access and insights into Muslim communities than any other organisation.

Furthermore, our educational programs have had a huge outreach and impact amongst British Muslims. To date, over 40,000 British Muslims have attended our Islamophobia presentation that highlights the causes and possible solutions to Islamophobia, and well over 3,000 people have completed our full-day masterclass covering the importance and methods of becoming actively engaged within politics and media. Meanwhile, our 'Get Out and Vote' campaign has empowered tens of thousands of British Muslims through facilitating their involvement in the democratic process.

MEND has recognition beyond Muslim communities through our Islamophobia Awareness Month (IAM) campaign. This is an inter-community campaign which runs throughout November each year in partnership with Police and Crime Commissioners (PCC), local councils, journalists and local media, councillors and local MPs, mosques, universities, schools, community organisations and others, in order to highlight the positive contributions of British Muslims and raise awareness of Islamophobia.

Another example of MEND's recognition and credibility amongst British Muslims is the success of our newly launched Islamophobia Response Unit (IRU), which has already recorded and dealt with hundreds of cases since its launch in April 2017. Considering the notorious difficulty of encouraging victims of all forms of hate to report incidents either to the police or to third-party-reporting centres, our success in receiving such a huge number of reports is testament to the trust that MEND occupies amongst British Muslims.

Recognised partners

MEND enjoys the support of a wide range of political and public bodies and organisations. As one example of our work, MEND continues to work with local councils across the UK to ensure Islamophobia is part of their hate crime strategy, and we were also responsible for successfully working with UK police forces to record Islamophobia as a separate category of hate crime – similar to racism and anti-Semitism.

Examples of our other partners include:

- MEND is an official partner with the Electoral Commission.
- MEND sits on the CPS' hate-crime accountability forums.
- MEND served as Secretariat to the first Islamophobia APPG.
- IPSO recognises MEND as a representative body for the Muslim community.
- Over 20 police constabularies across the United Kingdom have worked with MEND to tackle Islamophobia and many participate in Islamophobia Awareness Month run by MEND.
- MEND works with numerous teaching unions to deliver Islamophobia lessons in schools.

MEND's achievements can be read in full at:

Our advocacy work

MEND firmly believes that active engagement with political, media and public institutions is the only way to successfully address issues and challenges facing British Muslims and other minority communities. To this end, we regularly collaborate with parliamentarians and other organisations to highlight and address social, political and economic problems affecting vulnerable groups in Britain.

In combination with our parliamentary outreach, we also deliver resources to members of the public that provide informative insights into these issues.

Some of the resources we provide in this regard include:

- **Submissions to government inquiries:** MEND has submitted evidence to a variety of public inquiries, including the Leveson Inquiry, the Shami Chakrabarti Inquiry into antisemitism and other forms of racism in the Labour Party, the House of Lords Select Committee Hearing on Citizenship and Civic Engagement, and the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee Inquiry into Fake News.
- **Bi-monthly parliamentary updates:** These are regular updates we send to parliamentarians that highlight events and issues arising within Muslim communities, and which are designed to keep our political representatives apprised of the achievements and concerns of British Muslims.
- **Briefing Papers:** MEND has authored dozens of briefing papers on areas such as hate crime, press regulation, policing and counter terrorism to name but a few.
- **Factsheets:** MEND has created a catalogue of dozens of easy-read factsheets that provide brief overviews and statistics on a plethora of subjects ranging from the demographics of British Muslims, to education, employment discrimination, the NHS, media and minority rights.
- **Toolkits:** MEND has devised a series of simple toolkits for guidance on questions surrounding how to report a hate crime and how to make a media complaint.
- **MEND Exhibition:** MEND has developed an educational exhibition showcasing the positive contributions of British Muslims in sport, politics, medicine, and business, as well as demonstrating the effects of Islamophobia, media representation, and other issues on Muslim communities. The exhibition itself has been displayed in various schools, universities, libraries, businesses, councils and public organisations as an educational and informative resource promoting community interaction.
- **Manifestos:** In the approach to both general and local elections, MEND produces manifestos to advise candidates on the issues that are of interest to Muslims within their constituencies. In addition to this, MEND also provides summaries of major party manifestos in order to help British Muslims to understand the main issues that may concern them and opposing parties' positions on them.

MEND's advocacy resources and publications can be found at:

What do we believe in?

There are several principles guiding our work:

- **Democracy & empowerment:** political participation of British Muslims is our *raison d'être*. Our 'Get Out and Vote' campaign and the educational masterclasses we deliver encouraging political engagement have empowered tens of thousands of Muslims to become politically involved in the democratic process. Increasing political participation and civic engagement strengthens our democracy and should be supported.
- **The rule of law and individual liberty:** MEND fully supports the rule of law and individual liberty. MEND works closely with parts of the CPS and police constabularies across the country to this end. In fact, we successfully advocated for Islamophobia to be recorded as a separate category of hate-crime similar to racism and anti-Semitism.
- **Mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs:** MEND has developed a series of educational resources and training programmes to aid in the teaching of Islamophobia, anti-Semitism and all forms of hatred. The issues surrounding anti-Semitism were mentioned 11 times in our 2017 Manifesto, where we also called for better legal protections against homophobic and disability related hate crime as well.² Furthermore, there have been numerous occasions when our working groups have shown solidarity and support to Jewish and other communities in times of crisis.³
- **Freedom to review government policies and legislation, and constructively criticise for the benefit of strengthening our democracy:** We believe it is a cornerstone of our democracy that any individual or organisation should be free to robustly criticise any aspect of government policy or legislation. To do so is a natural and integral part of the democratic process and is no indication of extremism or disloyalty. Indeed, we believe the Government should welcome honest criticism from 'critical friends', such as ourselves, in order to approach any inadequacies within policies constructively and through engagement. We recognise that there are a multitude of views in key policy areas, however, Muslims – as British citizens – have an inalienable right to express views on all policies that affect their communities. Moreover, there are certain policy issues that Muslims are frequently portrayed as being ineligible to lodge criticism. One such area is the delicate balance between preserving civil liberties and security. In reality, Muslims are arguably amongst the most affected by counter-terror policies, and thus are entitled to constructively engage with the development and implementation of these strategies, as are all British citizens.
- **Upholding human rights, both in the UK and abroad:** We believe that all people have the ethical and moral obligation to promote human rights and humanitarian wellbeing both domestically and beyond our borders. On occasion, this may involve criticism of the policies of our own government, or being critical of repressive regimes abroad which our government has close ties with. Once again, this criticism is not an indication of disloyalty,

² See "MEND Muslim Manifesto 2017", MEND, accessed 17.11.2017, https://mend.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/MEND-Muslim-Manifesto-2017_FINAL_lowres-1.pdf

³ "Muslims offer 'wonderful' gesture of support to local synagogue after it is daubed with swastika graffiti", *The Independent*, October 14, 2017, accessed 17.11.2017, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/muslims-leeds-synagogue-swastika-graffiti-facebook-jewish-support-hate-crime-police-a8000441.html>

or that we are 'anti-government'. Rather, we are upholding human principles of justice, and using the vehicle of democracy to ensure that those principles are upheld.

- **A free, fair and accountable press:** We fully support a free and accountable press and believe that the press' ability to hold political powers to account is a cornerstone of a democratic society. However, such a right is also accompanied by responsibilities and it is clear that sections of the press have a history of irresponsible, misrepresentative and distorted reporting on minority groups – and Muslims in particular. One of the greatest challenges facing the active civic, social and political engagement of British Muslims is the current atmosphere of hatred and mistrust which is being fuelled by these high levels of irresponsible and inaccurate media reporting. In a climate lacking in respect, stigmatised communities become vulnerable to hatred – hatred that in many cases has escalated to violence and even to deaths, as demonstrated by the attack in Finsbury Park in 2017. We thus believe that the Royal Charter – as recommended by the Leveson Inquiry – must be implemented in full, in order to facilitate a press that is both free and accountable by offering legal protection to vulnerable communities.

What we DON'T believe in

It is important we dispel some of the truly surprising hysteria and myths surrounding our organisation:

- **We are NOT 'anti-government' or 'extremists':** As previously mentioned, the ability to criticise government policy and hold our political representatives to account is an integral component of the democratic process. Indeed, constructive criticism of governmental policies is the method through which society thrives and progresses. It is true that we have concerns with a limited number of governmental policies, however, constructive criticism and collaborative engagement is a sign of healthy democracies wherein ideas are challenged and debated. Moreover, there are naturally large areas of government policy that we fully support, thus it would be disingenuous for our critics to focus exclusively on our disagreements in order to portray us as being intrinsically anti-government or extremist.
- **We do NOT support nor sympathise with terrorism:** A great deal of emphasis has been placed upon our opposition to one strand of the Government's counter-terrorism strategy, Prevent. However, our opposition to this component of the overall strategy is based on the lack of an evidentiary basis supporting its development, and the discriminatory manner in which it is applied, disproportionately affecting Muslims. Indeed, MEND is not alone in this criticism; two special rapporteurs to the UN, the NUT (now the NEU), the NUS, the former Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation, Rights Watch UK, and the Open Society Justice Initiative have all criticized Prevent, along with more than 140 academics, politicians and experts in a single letter alone. Any suggestion that opposing this singular aspect of the Government's multifaceted counter-terror strategy is tantamount to supporting terrorism is thus clearly a ludicrous charge. This is especially surprising when one considers that MEND set up a charity appeal for the victims and families of the Manchester Arena terror attack, in which we raised £38,000.
- **We are NOT anti-Semitic:** Many of the accusations in this area have been due to a wilful misrepresentation and conflation of views criticising Israel with anti-Semitism. We believe that anyone should be free to criticise the policies and practices of the state of Israel without

fear of being labelled anti-Semitic – in much the same way as one could criticise the policies of Iran, Saudi Arabia or Pakistan without fear of being labelled Islamophobic. However, we accept that there are occasions when some of the language used by employees and volunteers could have been clearer to avoid such a misinterpretation.

Our Policy Pledges

As a result of our work within British Muslim communities, we have devised a series of policy pledges which we believe to be essential in order to effectively tackle Islamophobia in all of its forms in the UK. We therefore urge the Government and political parties to debate and commit to the following pledges:

1. Commit to fostering social cohesion and community resilience to all forms of extremism, and support de-radicalisation programmes that work with Muslim communities not against them.
2. Commit to providing greater transparency of Channel referrals.
3. Commit to a review of the 2006 Racial and Religious Hatred Act and consider primary legislation to deal with social media offences and hate speech online.
4. Commit to preserving the Human Rights Act and the protection of minority rights including rights to religious slaughter, male circumcision and wearing of religious dress or symbols.
5. Commit to developing teaching materials to educate young people on Islamophobia, racism, and antisemitism, and prioritise religious education in the national curriculum to prepare young people for life in a religiously plural society.
6. Commit to strengthening powers of teachers to deal with racist and Islamophobic bullying in schools, whilst supporting the education sector in developing Islamophobia awareness training programmes designed to equip staff with the skills to identify and tackle hate incidents in schools.
7. Commit to tackling religious discrimination in the workplace and addressing the low level of economic activity amongst Muslims through targeted interventions at all stages of recruitment, retention and promotion, and improving access to employment for British Muslim women in particular.
8. Commit to media reform and the full implementation of the Royal Charter on a Leveson compliant regulator.
9. Commit to improving BME recruitment to the police service, including with affirmative action measures.
10. Commit to reducing the high number of Muslim prisoners through schemes to facilitate rehabilitation, cut re-offending and develop pathways for social inclusion.
11. Commit to supporting for the creation of an independent state of Palestine and an end to Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territories.

12. Commit to democracy and human rights promotion abroad, including the rights of religious minorities.

The context of allegations against MEND

MEND firmly believes that all citizens have a responsibility in contributing to the positive and sustained development of a Britain in which all members of society are valued and respected, whatever their religious, racial or ethnic background, their gender or their sexual orientation. However, British Muslims have remained on the margins of public and political debate about their religion and place in modern Britain for too long, and the level of Muslim participation in media and politics remains woefully low.

It is saddening that, in the face of this mission to promote the political and media engagement of British Muslims, the increased political participation of Muslims is perceived as a threat to the interests of certain groups and individuals. As such, there is a concerted effort exerted largely by some right-wing groups in the UK which, taking advantage of significant funding and international connections, attempt to marginalise Muslim communities through techniques of sensationalist media coverage, methodologically flawed-research and scaremongering strategies.

One example of this was the repeated attempts to smear London Mayor Sadiq Khan by suggesting he had links with ISIS.⁴ Indeed, Khan was demonised by the political opposition (Theresa May, Boris Johnson, Michael Gove and Zac Goldsmith fiercely criticised Khan, most notably accusing him of being unsafe to run London because of his history of defending extremists in his previous job as a human rights lawyer)⁵ and was smeared in leading right-wing newspapers, including the Daily Mail, The Sun, The Evening Standard and the Telegraph.

The Islamophobia Industry and Professional Islamophobia

It is useful to acknowledge the large corpus of research that has unequivocally evidenced the existence of a well-financed campaign of right-wing extremist organisations and individuals, whose goal is to fuel Islamophobia and maximise the marginalisation of Muslims across the world. This practice has been described as *Professional Islamophobia*, in reference to the fact that these organisations and individuals have made careers through the spreading of Islamophobia.

In his powerful book “The Islamophobia Industry”, Nathan Lean examines the interconnected, and highly organized industry of manufacturing fear against Muslims. Within his discussions, Lean exposes the scare tactics, motives, and interests that drive this dangerous and influential network. As Lean states:

“Fear sells and the Islamophobia Industry – a right-wing cadre of intellectual hucksters, bloggers, politicians, pundits, and religious leaders – knows that all too well. For years they have labored behind the scenes to convince their compatriots that Muslims are the enemy, exhuming the ghosts of 9/11 and dangling them before the eyes of horrified populations for great fortune and fame. Their plan has worked.

⁴ “The bus driver's son who became London's first Muslim mayor: How ex-human rights lawyer Sadiq Khan has been dogged by links to extremists - but claims he's a moderate who loves manicures and wooed his wife with a Filet-O-Fish in McDonald's”, *The Daily Mail*, May 6, 2016, accessed 17.11.2017, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3575614/Introducing-London-s-Muslim-mayor-Sadiq-Khan-bus-driver-s-son-human-rights-lawyer-dogged-links-extremists-claims-moderate-loves-manicures-wooed-wife-McDonald-s.html#ixzz4ygsWGBjn>

⁵ “Sadiq Khan 'isn't fit to be Mayor of London because of his links to extremists', declares Theresa May as a string of senior Tories turn up heat on Labour candidate”, *The Daily Mail*, April 10, 2016, accessed 23.01.2018, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3532474/Sadiq-Khan-isn-t-fit-Mayor-London-links-extremists-declares-Theresa-Tories-turn-heat-Labour-candidate.html#ixzz50fBIUVyb>

The tide of Islamophobia that is sweeping through Europe and the United States is not a naturally occurring phenomenon. It is their design. In recent years, Muslim-led terrorist attacks have declined yet anti-Muslim prejudice has soared to new peaks. The fear that the Islamophobia Industry has manufactured is so fierce in its grip on some populations that it drives them to do the unthinkable.”⁶

In its report “Fear Inc.”, the Center for American Progress Action Fund (CAP) conclude that *“there is a small, tightly networked group of right-wing influentials producing misinformation against Muslims that reaches millions of Americans”*. A number of foundations, including William Rosenwald Family Fund, Donors Capital Fund, and Richard Mellon Scaife, among others, provide a seemingly limitless stream of money *“to a core group of ‘scholars’ who produce talking points, which activists and media figures then disseminate and politicians help mainstream”*.⁷ This tendency happens too often in the United Kingdom as well, where groups such as the Henry Jackson Society – incidentally funded by Nina Rosenwald herself⁸ – bring Islamophobia into the mainstream discourse and attempt to influence the public as well as policy-makers.

Undoubtedly, one organisation guilty of perpetuating attempts to marginalise Muslim voices in the UK is the Henry Jackson Society (HJS), the anti-Muslim nature, connections and funding of which were comprehensively exposed by the *Spinwatch* report “The Henry Jackson Society and the Degeneration of British Neoconservatism: Liberal Interventionism, Islamophobia and the ‘War on Terror’”.⁹

In their book “What is Islamophobia?”, Massoumi, Mills & Miller comprehensively survey the anti-Muslim landscape of the UK. Within the book, the authors devote an entire chapter to analysing the influence of neoconservative think-tanks like HJS, concluding that *“the neoconservative movement has been extremely important in advancing Islamophobic ideas and practice. It has performed a specific role in relation to policy and public debate... It can include liberal or high minded statements about issues of moral principle and the spread of democracy, and the arguments are addressed to elite audiences rather than street armies, though of course they help to legitimise Islamophobia on the street.”*¹⁰

In parallel with these efforts to marginalise Muslim voices within political and social discourse, is the problem of scapegoating and negative portrayal of minorities within mainstream media. It is well known that “fear sells”, and it is evident that large segments of the press have profited from newspaper sales capitalising on emotive and negative portrayals of minorities.

Considering the need to end this narrative based on distortions, fear and hatred, MEND is working towards a more ethical and accountable system of press regulation on a Leveson compliant basis through the complete enactment of the Royal Charter and Section 40. This would severely hinder publishers’ abilities to continue unethical practices of smearing

⁶ Nathan Lean, “The Islamophobia Industry”, Nathan Lean WordPress, accessed 20.12.2017, <https://nathanlean.wordpress.com/books/the-islamophobia-industry/>

⁷ “Ending Islamophobia”, Center for American Progress Action Fund, August 29, 2011, accessed 17.11.2017, <https://www.americanprogressaction.org/progress-reports/ending-islamophobia/>

⁸ Who is herself described as the “sugar-mama of anti-Muslim hate”.

⁹ Tom Griffin Hilary, Aked David Miller and Sarah Marusek, “The Henry Jackson Society and the Degeneration of British Neoconservatism: Liberal Interventionism, Islamophobia And the ‘War on Terror’”, *Spinwatch*, accessed 17.11.2017, http://spinwatch.org/images/Reports/HJS_spinwatch%20report_web_2015.pdf

¹⁰ Griffin, T., Miller, D., & Mills, T., *The Neoconservative Movement: Think tanks as elite elements of social movements from above. In What is Islamophobia?: Racism, Social Movements*, Eds Massoumi, Mills & Miller. (Pluto Press: London, 2017), p. 231.

minorities for the sake of sales, so is frequently perceived as a severe threat to publishers' interests.

Attacks on MEND

During the final months of 2017, the combined efforts of anti-Muslim, far-right organisations (such as HJS) and sections of the right-wing media were clearly visible in a coordinated attempt to smear MEND as an extremist organisation, thus closing down an important platform for British Muslim voices. In the week prior to the publication of HJS's report on MEND, there were no less than 7 negative mainstream news articles written about MEND. The day following our Parliamentary event, on 1st November 2017, there were no less than ten articles portraying MEND and those who attended or supported our event in the same negative vein. This is no coincidence. As such, it is evident that there is a purposeful and coordinated attempt by right wing think-tanks such as HJS and elements of the right-wing press to attack MEND and put pressure on parliamentarians and political representatives to dissuade them from engaging with us. The primary ammunition for this attack was linking a selection of social media posts and selective extracts from presentations in order to produce a manufactured narrative of an 'extremist' organisation.

MEND's attackers

Neo-conservatives

As many of MEND's attackers, including HJS and Nick Cohen, hail from staunchly right-wing, often extremist, neoconservative positions, it is useful to briefly clarify what is meant by the term 'neoconservative'.

Having emerged in the US in the 1960s, neoconservatism has often been described as "*Wilsonianism on steroids*" to indicate a hard-line, Christian crusader-like approach to protect western values and interests, defeat adverse ideologies, and export the American model of liberal democracy everywhere through an interventionist foreign policy. In relation to the Arab world specifically, neoconservatives believe in an almost messianic mission to defend Israel and defeat Islam, which is framed within a Huntingtonian-like view of a *Clash of Civilizations* between democratic and Islamic societies.¹¹

A senior fellow at the Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Affairs, Jonathan Clarke, highlighted the main characteristics of neoconservatism as "*a tendency to see the world in binary good/evil terms*", a "*low tolerance for diplomacy*", a "*readiness to use military force*", an "*emphasis on US unilateral action*", a "*disdain for multilateral organizations*" and a "*focus on the Middle East*".¹² In foreign policy, neoconservatives' main concern is to prevent the development of a new rival.

British neoconservatism does not differ much from the American one, yet as pointed out by Lee Jarvis and Michael Lister, British neoconservatives are far more careful in labelling themselves in such a way due to the very negative association of the term and with George W.

¹¹G. John Ikenberry et al., *The crisis of American foreign policy: Wilsonianism in the twenty-first century*, (Princeton, N.J.; Oxford: Princeton University Press, cop. 2009).

¹² "Viewpoint: The end of the neo-cons?", *BBC News*, February 9, 2009, accessed 22.12.2017, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/7825039.stm>

Bush and the “*deceptions of the war in Iraq*.”¹³ Even so, they fully embrace the concept of the West’s struggle with “*the Other*”, as well as the domestic mission of protecting society from the perceived threat posed by Islamic ideologies, and the foreign mission of securing Israel’s interests.¹⁴

These missions translate into a hard-line, exclusionary approach to issues surrounding the engagement and inclusion of Muslims in British society. Although this is often masqueraded as a legitimate, and largely shareable, effort to prevent the proliferation of radical ideologies, it conceals a clear opposition to anything and anyone who does not share the neoconservative way of looking at the world. Such an approach entails highly selective engagement with Muslim associations and organisations; engagement that is exclusively limited to those with whom will cooperate in the advancement of a specific political agenda. Meanwhile, anyone who proposes legitimate concerns about specific counter-terrorism strategies, or even an alternative way of looking at the world, is demonised and singled out following a standardised smearing campaign. Accusations of radicalism, anti-Semitism and opposition to democracy are thus frequent weapons in these smearing attempts.

The Henry Jackson Society (HJS) and Tom Wilson

The Henry Jackson Society (HJS) is a UK based, neoconservative think-tank that claims to combat extremism, advance democracy and promote human rights. However, since its inception, HJS has been exposed for adopting a progressively more neoconservative agenda, fiercely advocating in the interests of Israel, and advancing increasingly Islamophobic objectives. Indeed, one of its own founders has described it as a ‘corrupt’ think-tank.¹⁵

Having long been embroiled in controversy, HJS has gained notoriety through frequent anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant comments made by its senior members, particularly figures such as Associate Director Douglas Murray and current Director Alan Mendoza. As but one example, during a speech made by Murray in 2006, the HJS Associate Director said: “*Conditions for Muslims in Europe must be made harder across the board: Europe must look like a less attractive proposition.*”¹⁶

As another example of Douglas Murray’s activities, he has also participated in anti-Muslim conferences organised by the David Horowitz Freedom Center in the US, alongside Robert Spencer (who incidentally was banned from the UK), Frank Gaffney and right-wing journalist Melanie Phillips.¹⁷

The HJS political agenda and narratives are largely established by Alan Mendoza, who is undoubtedly the most senior figure in the organisation. Dr Mendoza is himself an outspoken supporter of Israel, with strong connections with the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), arguably the best-known pro-Israel lobby in the world. As evidenced by John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, AIPAC is run by hardliners who generally support

¹³ Lee Jarvis, Michael Lister, *Critical Perspectives on Counter-terrorism*, (London, New York: Routledge, 2015), p. 192.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ “Brendan Simms and the racist corrupt Henry Jackson Society”, *Linkedin*, February 18, 2017, accessed 05.01.2018, <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/brendan-simms-racist-corrupt-henry-jackson-society-matthew/>

¹⁶ “Paul Goodman: Why the Conservative frontbench broke off relations with Douglas Murray – and what happened afterwards”, *Conservative Home*, October 17, 2011, accessed 03.11.2017, <https://www.conservativehome.com/thecolumnists/2011/10/by-paul-goodman-the-struggle-against-islamist-extremism-demands-from-the-start-the-separation-of-islam-a-complex-religion.html>

¹⁷ “Jihad against the West”, *Daily Motion*, undated, accessed 05.01.2018, <http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x52fm2>

the expansionist policies of Israel's Likud party.¹⁸ In June 2011, Mendoza addressed AIPAC by raising fears about Muslim demographic growth in Europe. He contended that “*The European Muslim population has doubled in the past 30 years and is predicted to double again by 2040*” and that “*it has been difficult for European countries to absorb immigrants into their society given their failure to integrate newcomers*”.¹⁹ The argument was later proven to be completely untrue, and nothing more than a “*hyperbolic and inflammatory claim*”, based largely on data manipulation.²⁰

Beyond the comments made by senior HJS figures, is also worth noting that in 2014, HJS was removed from the All Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs) on homeland and international security for failing to “*make available on request a list citing any commercial company which had donated more than £5,000 either as a single sum or cumulatively in the last 12 months*”.²¹

Although HJS does not disclose its sources of funding, investigations conducted by the non-profit organisation *Spinwatch* have revealed a worrying record of pro-Israel/Zionist and Islamophobic donors.²² With the exception of the Eranda Foundation, all of the thirteen largest identified donors identified in *Spinwatch*'s report²³ contributed to the United Jewish Israel Appeal. Meanwhile, the UK Friends of the Association for the Well-being of Israel's Soldiers and the Jewish National Fund each received funding from six HJS donors, while four donors contributed to the Jerusalem Fund.²⁴

HJS also receives funds from US organisations, such as the Abstraction Fund, presided by Nina Rosenwald. Famously dubbed “the Sugar Mama of anti-Muslim Hate”,²⁵ Rosenwald is the founder and director of the famously right-wing and Islamophobic Gatestone Institute. Furthermore, since 2000, Rosenwald has contributed nearly \$3 million to finance the Center for Security Policy, Project Ijtihad, the American Islamic Forum for Democracy, the Middle East Forum, the Clarion Fund, Commentary Magazine and the Hudson Institute as well as

¹⁸ John J. Mearsheimer, Stephen M. Walt, “The Israel Lobby And U.S. Foreign Policy”, *Middle East Policy*, Vol. XIII, No. 3, Fall 2006, p. 40, accessed 22.12.2017, <http://mearsheimer.uchicago.edu/pdfs/IsraelLobby.pdf>

¹⁹ “The Henry Jackson Society And The Degeneration Of British Neoconservatism...”, p. 39.

²⁰ “Why the Muslim 'No-Go-Zone' Myth Won't Die”, *The Atlantic*, January 20, 2015, accessed 10.11.2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/01/paris-mayor-to-sue-fox-over-no-go-zone-comments/384656/>. See also Doug Saunders, *The Myth of the Muslim Tide: Do immigrants threaten the West?*, (Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2013). See also John Feffer, *Crusade 2.0: The West's Resurgent War on Islam*, (New York: City Light Books, Open Media Series, 2012).

²¹ “Rightwing thinktank pulls funds for Commons groups after disclosure row”, *The Guardian*, December 30, 2014, accessed 05.01.2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2014/dec/30/rightwing-thinktank-pulls-funds-commons-groups-disclosure-rules>

²² “Student Rights 'Campus Extremism' Study: Dishonest Pseudo-Science in Support Of a Toxic Narrative”, *Huffington Post*, July 7, 2013, accessed 03.11.2017, http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/hilary-aked/student-rights-campus-extremism-study_b_3277503.html

²³ These are: Atkin Charitable Foundation, Stanley Kalms Foundation, Catherine Lewis Foundation, Bernard Lewis Family Charitable Trust, Eranda Foundation, Mintz Family Foundation, Sir John Ritblat Family Foundation, Maurice Hatter Foundation, G.R.P Charitable Trust, Wigoder Family Foundation, City of London, Phillips and Rubens Charitable Trust, Loftus Charitable Trust, Ann Zachary Foundation, Control Risks Group[453], Henry Jackson Society Inc., Rockefeller Foundation, Ford Foundation, Henry Jackson Foundation, Star Family Foundation, Abstraction Fund, Somekh Family Foundation, Koret Foundation, Michael Koss Charitable Foundation.

²⁴ “The Henry Jackson Society And The Degeneration Of British Neoconservatism...”, p. 60.

²⁵ “The Sugar Mama of Anti-Muslim Hate”, *The Nation*, June 14, 2012, accessed 03.11.2017, <https://www.thenation.com/article/sugar-mama-anti-muslim-hate/>

the Gatestone Institute. All these institutions have the common goal of fanning “*the flames of Islamophobia*.”²⁶

HJS is also currently under investigation by the Charity Commission for allegedly receiving £10,000 by the Japanese embassy to promote anti-China propaganda.²⁷

HJS activities span from lobbying the Government, to controlling narratives across media and university campuses on subjects such as the war on terror, terrorism and radical Islam. Student Rights (SR) is the ‘on campus’ arm of HJS and has been accused of seeking to pressure universities to “*impose restrictive measures on Muslim students that would, in effect, institutionalise Islamophobia*” and its work has been described as seeking “*to narrow the space for all radical political dissent on campus*.”²⁸ Student Rights has also been condemned by the NUS for its use of flawed methodologies and has subsequently been widely criticised for its “*dishonest pseudo-science in support of a toxic narrative*”.²⁹ Meanwhile, the conclusions of SR’s reports have been discredited and labelled “*a witch-hunt which makes sweeping judgments about student Islamic societies*”.³⁰

Furthermore, figures within HJS and SR – such as former UKIP candidate Raheem Kassam – have been found to feed false stories to the BBC and other news outlets in order to both disseminate pro-Israel information and to demonise pro-Palestine groups.³¹

In light of this established history of controversy, several public figures have distanced themselves from HJS. For example, Assistant Commissioner for London’s Metropolitan Police, Mark Rowley, snubbed an event hosted by HJS after complaints by Muslim groups that the “*right-wing think tank ‘demonised’ Islam*.”³² Similarly, Amber Rudd and a number of other members of Theresa May’s cabinet recently resigned from the Political Council of the Henry Jackson Society and quickly distanced themselves from the organisation.³³

Finally, it is important to note that HJS is registered as a charity but, as noted above, pursues clear political objectives. This is in contrast with the UK Government’s guidelines for charities, which clearly state that “*a charity cannot exist for a political purpose, which is any purpose directed at furthering the interests of any political party, or securing or opposing a change in the law, policy or decisions either in this country or abroad*”.³⁴ It is further stressed that “*charities may undertake campaigning and political activity provided... they retain their independence and political*

²⁶ “The Sugar Mama of Anti-Muslim Hate...”

²⁷ “Charity Commission looking into the Henry Jackson Society”, *Third Sector*, February 15, 2017, accessed 05.01.2018, <https://www.thirdsector.co.uk/charity-commission-looking-henry-jackson-society/governance/article/1424329>

²⁸ “Critical Perspectives on Counter-terrorism...” p. 192.

²⁹ “Student Rights ‘Campus Extremism’ Study...”

³⁰ “‘Extremists’ preaching to UK student societies,” *BBC News*, May 13, 2013, accessed 07.11.2017, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-22509757>.

³¹ “The Henry Jackson Society And The Degeneration Of British Neoconservatism...” p. 34.

³² “Police chief snubs ‘Islamist terrorism’ event after criticism”, *Middle East Eye*, March 7, 2017, accessed 05.01.2018, <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/police-chief-fails-appear-henry-jackson-society-panel-after-criticism-1594113197>

³³ “Theresa May’s cabinet scrambles to disassociate from extremist think-tank tied to Donald Trump”, *The Canary*, July 20, 2016, accessed 05.01.2017, <https://www.thecanary.co/uk/2016/07/20/theresa-mays-cabinet-scrambles-disassociate-extremist-think-tank-tied-donald-trump/>

³⁴ “Campaigning and political activity guidance for charities”, Gov.uk, *Charity Commission for England and Wales*, March 2008, accessed 03.11.2017 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/speaking-out-guidance-on-campaigning-and-political-activity-by-charities-c9/speaking-out-guidance-on-campaigning-and-political-activity-by-charities>

neutrality.”³⁵ The clear political bias of HJS is therefore in complete contradiction with the governmental campaigning and political activity guidance for charities.

The evolution of HJS into a right-wing think-tank signals its increasing subscription to illiberal approaches, particularly towards British Muslims. Marrying issues of integration with the larger “War on Terror” narrative, HJS has repeatedly distanced itself from charitable activities, neutrality and democratic values, and turned itself into a powerful instrument to advance a neoconservative agenda. As such, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to argue that HJS exists for the public benefit.

Tom Wilson

Tom Wilson is currently a Fellow at the Centre for the Response to Radicalisation and Terrorism and the Centre for the New Middle East at The Henry Jackson Society. Being a strong supporter of Israel, Wilson’s unipolar view often prevents him from providing rational and unbiased opinions or prescriptions on the issues of foreign and domestic policy he attempts to deal with. For example, Wilson wholeheartedly defended Israel’s illegal settlements in Palestinian territories by shifting the blame on Palestinians. He said: *“It seems than many people... are more angry about the building of Jewish houses in the West Bank than they are about the abuse of Palestinian rights by Palestinians... the focus is exclusively on finding reasons to boycott and demonise the world’s only Jewish State.”*³⁶

On another occasion in an article appearing in *The Times of Israel*, Wilson contended that Israel’s checkpoints are *“a crucial and non-violent means of protecting people from terrorists”*,³⁷ despite the fact that they have been – together with the separation wall – strongly criticised and described as an abuse of human rights.³⁸ While the separation wall itself was labelled “illegal” by the International Court of Justice (ICJ), the checkpoints were described by *Human Rights Watch* and a number of other international institutions as yet another “abusive” practice carried out by the Israeli government in its illegal occupation of Palestinian territories.³⁹

Tom Wilson’s writings evidence a clear political bias that sits well within HJS’s overarching narratives and objectives. In a piece for the *Commentary* conveniently titled “The Israeli Left Hates the Israeli People”, Wilson wholeheartedly expressed his support for the Israeli Likud Party, which was incidentally described by former Israeli Defence Minister Moshe Ya’alon as containing *“extremist and dangerous elements”*.⁴⁰

Finally, Wilson is associated with a number of pro-Israel organisations which claim to combat extremism and anti-Semitism but are, in truth, highly manipulative pressure groups that distort and misrepresent information about Palestinian territories to promote the goal of

³⁵ “Charities and Campaigning”, *The Electoral Commission*, undated, accessed 03.11.2017, http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/165961/intro-campaigning-charities-npc.pdf

³⁶ “HJS Research Fellow Tom Wilson on BBC The Big Questions Discussing Israeli Boycotts”, *YouTube*, February 13, 2017, accessed 22.12.2017 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BLS7MMVzD9E&feature=youtu.be>

³⁷ Tom Wilson, “What have Methodists got against the Jews?” *The Times of Israel*, September 19, 2016, accessed 03.01.2017, <http://blogs.timesofisrael.com/what-have-methodists-got-against-the-jews/>

³⁸ “Israel: New report condemns Israel’s ‘blatant violation of International Law’ in West Bank”, *Amnesty International Press Release*, undated, accessed 03.11.2017, <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/node/11525>

³⁹ “Israel: 50 Years of Occupation Abuses”, *Human Rights Watch*, June 4, 2017, accessed 07.11.2017, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/06/04/israel-50-years-occupation-abuses>

⁴⁰ “Extremists have taken over in Israel, says departing defence minister”, *The Telegraph*, May 20, 2016, accessed 07.11.2017, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/05/20/extremists-have-taken-over-in-israel-says-departing-defence-mini/>

“Greater Israel”. One example of these organisations with which Wilson is associated is *StandWithUs*, an organisation that, according to Israel’s former Deputy Foreign Minister Danny Ayalon, is indeed used by the Israeli government to “amplify” its power.⁴¹

Media figures and outlets

Aside from HJS, allegations against MEND come from a small group of largely discredited journalists, who have a history of subscribing to the political agenda of several right-wing organisations for the benefit of personal financial gain. The strategy followed by these individuals and outlets to advance their arguments against MEND is thus merely a politically motivated aggregation of false claims based on distorted stories, and is highly misrepresentative of what MEND does and what it stands for.

Andrew Gilligan

Current Sunday Times correspondent Andrew Gilligan has come under severe criticism in the past for his often ethically-dubious journalistic practice. Indeed, he was condemned during the Hutton Inquiry for “*loose use of language and lack of judgement in some of his phraseology*”, and for his journalistic style, which was highlighted as being “*marred by flawed reporting*”.⁴² In disregarding all forms of ethical conduct, Gilligan was described as adopting the tactic of “*sock-puppetry*” (defined as “*the act of creating a fake online identity to praise, defend or create the illusion of support for one's self, allies or company*”)⁴³ in order to secure Boris Johnson’s victory in the 2008 and 2012 mayoral campaigns. Furthermore, Boris Johnson himself has expressed disturbing views on homosexuals⁴⁴ and Congolese children.⁴⁵ As such, the ‘golden goodbye’ Johnson paid to Gilligan – amounting to no less than £50,000⁴⁶ – is perhaps evidence of Gilligan’s pragmatism in his personal convictions. Furthermore, this fluidity of personal morals is also evidenced by Gilligan’s employment as a presenter on the anti-Semitic Iranian broadcaster Press TV⁴⁷, a position he was reportedly paid £5,000 per week in as one of the channel’s highest paid employees.⁴⁸

⁴¹ “The Sugar Mama of Anti-Muslim Hate...”

⁴² Lord Brian Hutton, “Report of the Inquiry into the Circumstances Surrounding the Death of Dr David Kelly”, Great Britain, Parliament, p. 207, accessed 23.01.2018, <https://fas.org/irp/world/uk/huttonreport.pdf>

⁴³ “Andrew Gilligan, “kennite” and sockpuppeting”, *The Guardian*, November 3, 2008, accessed 30.11.2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/davehillblog/2008/nov/03/gilligan>

⁴⁴ “Owen Jones: The 1 per cent have an interest in demonising Ken Livingstone”, *The Independent*, April 12, 2012, accessed 30.11.2017, <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/commentators/owen-jones-the-1-per-cent-have-an-interest-in-demonising-ken-livingstone-7640660.html>

⁴⁵ “If Blair's so good at running the Congo, let him stay there”, *The Telegraph*, January 10, 2002, accessed 30.11.2017, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/personal-view/3571742/If-Blairs-so-good-at-running-the-Congo-let-him-stay-there.html>

⁴⁶ “Nine aides to Boris Johnson handed ‘golden goodbye’ payouts totalling £450,000”, *Evening Standard*, June 13, 2016, accessed 01.12.2017, <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/nine-aides-to-boris-johnson-handed-golden-goodbye-payouts-totalling-450000-a3270121.html>

⁴⁷ Mehdi Hasan, “The truth about Andrew Gilligan,” *New Statesman*, November 22, 2010, accessed January 05, 2018, <https://www.newstatesman.com/blogs/mehdi-hasan/2010/11/andrew-gilligan-islamism-press>.

⁴⁸ Dilly Hussain, “Which Muslim figure or group hasn't Andrew Gilligan labelled an “extremist”?” *5Pillars*, August 12, 2015, accessed January 05, 2018, <https://5pillarsuk.com/2015/08/11/which-muslim-figure-or-group-hasnt-andrew-gilligan-labelled-an-extremist/>.

Ultimately, it is arguable that Gilligan's efforts against Muslims do not stem from moral principles or genuine concerns, but merely by financial interests that motivate him to distort facts and manipulate stories to fit into the anti-Muslim narrative.

Dominic Kennedy

The Times investigative journalist Dominic Kennedy too is an unreliable source of information, as he holds a troubling attitude towards anti-Semitism, Racism, Homophobia, Islamophobia and women's rights. For instance, a comment made on Twitter in 2015 caused national outrage when Kennedy stated that "*So many of the VIPs accused of being Paedophiles are Jewish or gay. Maybe we could have a system to identify these people: triangles, stars*".⁴⁹ Kennedy was heavily criticised for these comments by figures within British Jewish organisations, including Simon Johnson, chief executive of the Jewish Leadership Council, Jonathan Arkush and Richard Verber, President and Senior Vice-President of the Board of Deputies.⁵⁰ While he did eventually apologise for the disgraceful remarks, this is an example of how such irresponsible conduct can cause emotional trauma to persecuted minorities for the sake of either utterly distasteful banter or Kennedy's own professional purposes.

Furthermore, despite framing his work as 'investigative journalism', from MEND's own experience of contact with Kennedy, his approach falls far short of what would be expected of an ethically balanced and open-minded investigation. In sourcing information for his stories on MEND, Kennedy has not contacted MEND in order to understand our work nor to understand the people within the organisation. His contact with MEND has been limited to a right to respond after having prepared a compilation of largely previously discredited allegations. In other words, his investigations have been confined to the story he intended to write – his pre-defined narrative informed his investigation. Considering the power of investigative journalism in holding the powerful to account, it is unfortunate that such disreputable and unethical reporting should tarnish the reputation of this profession.

Nick Cohen

Nick Cohen is a journalist who holds a neoconservative view of world affairs, which also informs his stance on domestic social issues and policies. In light of these firm neoconservative beliefs, Cohen was a strong advocate of the 2003 war in Iraq⁵¹ as well as for Western intervention in Syria.⁵²

Cohen is also one of the signatories of the *Euston Manifesto*, which was created in 2006 as a direct result of Europe's growing criticism of and opposition to the War on Terror. Within this manifesto any criticism of the US foreign policies is condemned and opposed, as well as portrayed as a traitorous attempt to halt the development of "new democratic life to [Iraq]"⁵³

⁴⁹ "Times Editor apologises for gay, Holocaust, paedophilia tweet", *PinkNews*, August 5, 2015, accessed 01.12.2017, <http://www.pinknews.co.uk/2015/08/05/times-editor-apologises-for-gay-holocaust-paedophilia-tweet/>

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Nick Cohen, "The Left isn't listening", *The Guardian*, February 16, 2003, accessed 20.12.2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2003/feb/16/foreignpolicy.iraq>

⁵² "The west has a duty to intervene in Syria", January 1, 2012, accessed 20.12.2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/jan/01/nick-cohen-intervene-in-syria>

⁵³ "The Euston Manifesto", accessed 20.12.2017, <http://eustonmanifesto.org/the-euston-manifesto/>

Many of the principles expressed in the Euston Manifesto are also shared in the Henry Jackson Society's statement of principles.⁵⁴

Considering that *"the neoconservative worldview is characterised by militarism, unilateralism and a firm commitment to Zionism"*,⁵⁵ rhetoric surrounding the American invasion of Iraq has become the symbol of the wave of neoconservatism that has spread from Washington to certain parts of Whitehall, and has attracted criticism from a number of institutions, scholars and experts.⁵⁶ In Britain, the neoconservative notion that there is a *"clash of civilizations"*, has contributed in reinforcing the divide between Muslims and non-Muslims, and has resulted in the demonisation of many Muslim organisations and individuals in the pursuit of the neoconservative agenda.

The Sun and the Daily Mail:

Martin Robinson, Ian Drury and Larisa Brown (Daily Mail),

Ben Lazarus (The Sun)

Robinson, Drury and Brown are reporters for the Daily Mail, which was recently accused by The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) of playing a *"prominent role in encouraging prejudice"* against vulnerable groups. The report pointed at both the **Daily Mail and the Sun**, claiming that they *"are responsible for most of the offensive, discriminatory and provocative terminology"*. Concluding that *"hate speech in some traditional media continues to be a serious problem"*,⁵⁷ the report highlighted articles such as the Sun's *"Rescue boats? I'd use gunships to stop migrants"*, in which the columnist, Katie Hopkins, likened migrants to cockroaches, and also highlighted The Sun's front-page headline *"1 in 5 Brit Muslims' sympathy for jihadis"* which was subsequently found to be wholly inaccurate and a forced retraction and apology was issued.

Furthermore, in 2017, the Daily Mail was banned as a reliable source on Wikipedia due to its *"reputation for poor fact checking and sensationalism"*.⁵⁸

The United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), also highlighted the disturbing journalism of the Sun and the Daily Mail, arguing: *"The two right wing tabloids in our sample, the Daily Mail and Sun, were unlike anything else in our study... what really differentiated these two titles was their aggressive editorialising around threat themes, and in particular how they presented refugee and migrants as a burden on Britain's welfare state. Both papers also featured humanitarian themes at a much lower level than any other newspapers in our study. Overall, this meant that the Sun and the*

⁵⁴ "Statement of Principles", *The Henry Jackson Society*, accessed 20.12.2017, <http://henryjacksonsociety.org/about-the-society/statement-of-principles/>

⁵⁵ "How Neoconservatives led us to war in Iraq", *The National*, December 11, 2014, accessed 22.12.2017, <https://www.thenational.ae/arts-culture/how-neoconservatives-led-us-to-war-in-iraq-1.605396>

⁵⁶ See for example "Iraq: the Biggest Mistake in American Military History", *Forbes*, December 15, 2011, accessed 22.12.2017, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/lorenthompson/2011/12/15/the-biggest-mistake-in-american-military-history/#ca1ba232d3b0>

⁵⁷ "ECRI Report On The United Kingdom", *Council of Europe*, October 4, 2016, accessed 20.12.2017, https://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/country-by-country/united_kingdom/gbr-cbc-v-2016-038-eng.pdf

⁵⁸ Jackson, Jasper. "Wikipedia bans Daily Mail as 'unreliable' source." *The Guardian*. February 8, 2017. <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/feb/08/wikipedia-bans-daily-mail-as-unreliable-source-for-website>.

*Daily Mail exhibited both a hostility, and a lack of empathy with refugees and migrants that was unique.”*⁵⁹

However, the Sun and the Daily Mail are reflective of a wider problem. Indeed, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra’ad Al-Hussein, drew similar conclusions in 2015, when he noted that “*decades of sustained and unrestrained anti-foreigner abuse, misinformation and distortion*” were identified as a major problem in British press. He called on all European countries to take a firmer line on racism and xenophobia which “*under the guise of freedom of expression, are being allowed to feed a vicious cycle of vilification, intolerance and politicization of migrants, as well as of marginalized European minorities*”. Moreover, Al-Hussein identified the UK as a country in which the problem is particularly evident.⁶⁰

Harry’s Place

Harry’s Place is a right-wing, pro-Israel political blog that has earned itself a controversial reputation due to its neoconservative views on world affairs and Islamophobic posts. As its founder, Harry Hatchet, recalled in *The Guardian* in 2003, Harry’s Place was originally created to support the 2003 invasion of Iraq.⁶¹ As such, and line with Nick Cohen, several Harry’s Place bloggers, including Harry Hatchet himself and David Toube, figure among the signatories of the neoconservative *Euston Manifesto*, within which any criticism of the US foreign policies is condemned and opposed.⁶² Another contributor to Harry’s Place, George Readings, has also worked for the Quilliam Foundation and blogged for another famously neoconservative blog, *The Spittoon*.⁶³

Over the years, a number of progressive politicians (such as Jeremy Corbyn, Jenny Tonge and Ken Livingstone) and international organisations (such as *Amnesty International*, *Human Rights Watch*, and *Spinwatch*) have come under attack by Harry’s Place for supporting the Muslim community and being critical of Israel’s policies towards Palestine. As but one example of the impact of Harry’s Place’s often distorted reporting and analysis, in 2008 *The Spectator* magazine was the subject of a legal action over an article that appeared in its pages claiming that Islam Expo, a biennial Islamic exhibition, was a supporter of clerical fascism, genocide and racism. The basis of the *Spectator* magazine article was a piece that originally appeared on Harry’s Place.⁶⁴ The *Spectator* was forced to issue an apology following the ruling of the UK High Court.⁶⁵

⁵⁹ “Press Coverage of the Refugee and Migrant Crisis in the EU: A Content Analysis of Five European Countries”, UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), accessed 20.12.2017, <http://www.unhcr.org/uk/protection/operations/56bb369c9/press-coverage-refugee-migrant-crisis-eu-content-analysis-five-european.html> p. 253.

⁶⁰ “UN Human Rights Chief urges U.K. to tackle tabloid hate speech, after migrants called “cockroaches””, *United Nations Human Rights, Officer of the High Commissioner*, April 24, 2015, accessed 20.12.2017, <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=15885&LangID=E>

⁶¹ Harry Hatchet, “A blogger writes”, *The Guardian*, July 15, 2003, accessed 05.01.2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2003/jul/15/weblogs.egovernment>

⁶² “The Euston manifesto” ..., <http://eustonmanifesto.org/the-euston-manifesto/>

⁶³ “So Long, And Thanks For All The Fish”, June 19, 2009, accessed 05.01.2018, <https://web.archive.org/web/20090627120541/http://www.spittoon.org/archives/1227>

⁶⁴ “The Honourable Mr Justice Tugendhat Between Islam Expo LTD –and - (1) The Spectator (1828) Ltd (2) Stephen Pollard”, *England and Wales High Court (Queen’s Bench Division) Decisions*, accessed 23.01.2018, <http://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWHC/QB/2010/2011.html>

⁶⁵ “Islam Expo: Apology”, *The Spectator*, August 28, 2010, accessed 22.12.2017, <https://www.spectator.co.uk/2010/08/islam-expo-apology/>

Most of Harry's Place's bloggers have been embroiled in controversy due to defamatory and libellous claims. For example, David Toubé (incidentally the author of Harry's Place's entries against MEND), was threatened with legal action by George Galloway and Kevin Ovenden over repeated articles traducing the character and reputation of both as trustees of Viva Palestina, a charitable organisation which, since its formation in 2009, has succeeded in taking 5 humanitarian convoys to Gaza comprising of tens of thousands of pounds worth of children's toys, food, medicines and other essential humanitarian supplies. In particular, Toubé has repeatedly sought to paint the former Respect MP, George Galloway, as 'funding terrorism'. It is an accusation with absolutely no basis in fact and is designed to prevent and obstruct the provision of desperately needed humanitarian aid to the besieged people of Gaza.⁶⁶

Similarly, Gene Zitver, another blogger at Harry's Place, republished an article by Moshe Halbertal from The New Republic that tried to discredit the report produced by the United Nations on Israel's 2008-2009 assault on Gaza (Operation Cast Lead). In the article, it is clear that Zitver attempts to justify Israel's military operation (which resulted in the deaths of 1400 Palestinians, including 400 children) by claiming that the report was "fundamentally flawed and biased against Israel".⁶⁷

Why is MEND perceived as a threat?

MEND is largely seen as a threat because we are seen by some as 'uncontrollable'; in other words, because we are independent of political and financial agendas and are thus free to question the current socio-political status-quo. As mentioned previously, this independence is a positive consequence of our community funded infrastructure and subsequent ability to fully pursue the interests of British Muslims without the limitations of external agendas.

To date, the Government, sections of the press and right-wing organisations have only engaged with and tolerated Muslim organisations that into one of the following categories

- Those that the Government funds or has funded historically or helped to create.
- Those which right-wing (frequently neoconservative) organisations have created and/or strongly support.
- Those that essentially reflect the Government's own existing stance on Muslim related issues.

In addition to not fitting into the aforementioned categories, MEND holds three policy positions that create the perception that we are a threat to the interests of small sections of the Government, right-wing press and right-wing organisations.

- **Counter-terrorism:** our opposition to PREVENT creates an uncomfortable situation for policy makers. While these policy makers are undoubtedly exerting their best efforts to devise effective strategies in protecting our nation, there is a great deal of pressure created if flaws within these strategies are exposed.

⁶⁶ "George Galloway -v- Mr David Toubé", *Farooq Bajwa & Co Solicitors*, accessed 23.01.2018 <http://www.hurryupharry.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/SDOC2136.pdf>

⁶⁷ "A clear-eyed look at Cast Lead", *Harry's Place*, November 14, 2009, accessed 22.12.2017, <http://hurryupharry.org/2009/11/14/a-clear-eyed-look-at-cast-lead/>

- **Israel:** One of the policies put forward in our 2015 and 2017 Manifestos is a commitment to supporting for the creation of an independent state of Palestine and an end to Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territories. As previously discussed regarding the neoconservative leanings of many of our detractors, this position is inevitably perceived as a threat by those staunchly committed to defending against any and all criticism of Israel.
- **Media Regulation:** Lord Justice Leveson included all of the recommendations put forward by MEND following the first part of his inquiry into the culture, practices and ethics of the press. In the aftermath of the inquiry, newspapers lost their ability to continue unethical practices of tapping phones and pursuing family members of subjects of interest. Having lost this avenue of reporting, a section of the press has resorted to demonising Muslims and minorities in their attempt to maintain sales. Needless to say, MEND's continued efforts to hold the media account and to ensure the full implementation of Section 40 of the Royal Charter on Press Regulation have not been welcomed by these sections of the press. Were it to be implemented, Section 40 would severely curtail the press' ability to demonise minorities for the sake of profit.

Considering this perceived threat, organisations such as HJS, certain small segments of the Government and sections of the media have an explicit agenda of discrediting us by distorting facts and perpetuating innuendo in their efforts to promote a very false image of MEND. **The basic premise of their approach is to present us as being 'beyond the pale' in the hope that politicians and public bodies will refuse to work or engage with us.**

The importance of engagement

It is natural that attacks from the right-wing – often extremist neoconservative – movement, coupled with negative and deeply misleading right-wing press coverage, would make individuals and organisations who are unfamiliar with our work wary of us. However, in our experience, those who have had the courage and open-mindedness to sit down with us on a 1:1 basis and discuss the work of our organisation first hand, have come to see that we are not the 'Islamist' organisation that we are portrayed, and have been eager to work with us.

However, if policy makers implement a policy of non-engagement towards organisations such as MEND, they can only serve to lose valuable insight and engagement opportunities with vulnerable and marginalised communities. Engagement does not mean agreement on every issue, but it does mean working together to tackle issues of mutual interest and concern.

If the Government truly intends to tackle issues affecting Muslim communities, it is going to have to engage with a wider spectrum of organisations – and, considering MEND's grassroots support, that includes MEND.

Lessons must be learned from the Citizens UK's report, chaired by former Attorney General and Conservative MP, Dominic Grieve QC, entitled "The Missing Muslims: Unlocking British Muslim Potential for the Benefit of All" and which recommended: *"For the Government to reassess the way in which it engages with the UK's Muslim communities, and both the Government and Muslim communities to play their role in ending the current stalemate. There is a broken relationship that needs to be resolved, and both parties need to be proactive in addressing this. The Commission suggests that wider engagement, including the robust challenging of views with which it disagrees, rather than the apparent boycott of certain organisations, could best enable the Government*

*to hear from the widest possible cross-section of the UK's Muslim communities, including young people and women."*⁶⁸

Ultimately, the broken relationship between the Government and Muslim communities must be fixed, and engagement is the only way to achieve this. MEND believes that everyone has a responsibility to end the current atmosphere of hatred – a goal that is only going to be achieved by engagement. Engagement is MEND's *raison d'être* and promoting engagement between minorities and majorities, Muslims and non-Muslims, and between political representatives and their constituents continues to be our mission.

In her book, "The Enemy Within", Baroness Sayeeda Warsi laments the failure of successive governments to engage with Muslim organisations, including the Muslim Council of Britain, and concludes, *'the rules of engagement must be clear, but engagement there must be, as a disengaged community neither matters nor belongs'*.⁶⁹

We are ready to take up this challenge.

⁶⁸ "The Missing Muslims", *Citizens UK*, accessed 17.11.2017, http://www.citizensuk.org/missing_muslims

⁶⁹ Sayeeda Warsi. *The Enemy Within: A Tale of Muslim Britain*, (London; Allen Lane, 2017), p.133

Allegations against MEND

MEND's approach to these allegations

We have approached these allegations with an open mind. Every organisation makes mistakes and can learn from criticism from its most ardent of enemies. We are also mindful that we are a relatively young organisation, having only been present on the political stage since 2014 (although our predecessor organisation called iEngage had been present since 2007). Additionally, we are not politicians or seasoned campaigners in the world of politics, media or lobbying. We are simply ordinary British citizens (Muslim and non-Muslims) from different walks of life, seeking to help build a better society in the UK.

As such we recognise we will make mistakes occasionally and could express views in a more accurate manner than we sometimes have. We have used language at times that, with the benefit of hindsight, we regret and will endeavour to be clearer in how we express ourselves.

We are willing to reflect on these mistakes, learn the lessons and move on. The learning curve since our inception has been steep but we are ultimately on a journey, and no such organisation ends up in the same place that it started. Indeed, there are many professional politicians and parties who have changed their views on a number of social issues over the years, and of course many social views that were unacceptable a generation ago are now mainstream.

Allegation: MEND as an extremist organisation

According to the Government's definition of extremism, it is difficult to see how MEND could be considered in any way extremist. According to the definition, extremism is "*the vocal or active opposition to our fundamental values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and the mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs*". It also, "*regard[s] calls for the death of members of our armed forces as extremist*." In deconstructing that definition, it is clear that MEND does not fall into this category:

- **Democracy:** political participation of British Muslims is our *raison d'être*. Our 'Get Out and Vote' campaign is the largest of its kind in the UK and the educational masterclasses we deliver encouraging political engagement have empowered tens of thousands of Muslims to become politically involved in the democratic process.
- **The rule of law and individual liberty:** MEND fully supports the rule of law and individual liberty. MEND works closely with parts of the CPS and police constabularies across the country to this end. In fact, we successfully lobbied to ensure Islamophobia is recorded as a separate category of hate-crime similar to racism and anti-Semitism.
- **Mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs:** MEND has developed a series of educational resources and training programs to aid in the teaching of Islamophobia, anti-Semitism and all forms of hatred. The issues surrounding anti-Semitism were also mentioned 11 times in our 2017 Manifesto, where we also called for better legal protections against homophobic and disability related hate crime as well.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ "MEND Muslim Manifesto 2017"... , https://mend.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/MEND-Muslim-Manifesto-2017_FINAL_lowres-1.pdf

Furthermore, there have been numerous occasions when our working groups have shown solidarity and support to Jewish and other communities in times of crisis.⁷¹

- **Calls for the death of members of our armed forces:** MEND has never made or supported such a call. Accusations that occur in parts of the media to promote this image are a deliberate distortion of the comments made by Azad Ali prior to his time at MEND.

While the rest of the accusations against Mr Ali will be addressed further below, it seems prudent to address two of them at this point.

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.

As much of the criticism of MEND has revolved around our association with Mr Azad Ali, it is pertinent to mention at this stage that Mr Ali recently resigned from his position at MEND, and left the organisation in December 2017.

Allegation one: killing of British troops

Ali was “suspended amid claims that he used his personal website to justify the killing of British troops in Iraq... [he] was suspended on full pay for six months following comments on his blog”⁷²

Author: Mail on Sunday Reporter

Time and Date: 17:40, 12 July 2009

Publication: Mail Online

Mr Ali is on record stating that *he has never called for – and never will call for – attacks against British soldiers*.⁷³ The above accusation is based on misinterpretations of selective extracts from a blog entry by Mr Ali on the concept of jihad in Islam and reflections on the writings and statements of Islamic scholars on the subject. The Mail on Sunday used these extracts to suggest that Ali supported the view that killing British troops in Iraq is justified. We reject this allegation on the basis that it does not reflect the actual meaning of Mr Ali’s post. In reality, the **newspaper selectively quoted from the blog entries to misrepresent the**

⁷¹ “Muslims offer 'wonderful' gesture...”, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/muslims-leeds-synagogue-swastika-graffiti-facebook-jewish-support-hate-crime-police-a8000441.html>

⁷² “‘Kill soldiers’ Muslim blogger is back in job as Treasury civil servant”, *Mail on Sunday*, July 12, 2009, accessed 11.12.2017, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1199099/Kill-soldiers-Muslim-blogger-job-Treasury-civil-servant.html>

⁷³ “FYI- Clarity on repeatedly published lies about me”, *Azad Ali Blogspot*, July 14, 2015, accessed 23.01.2018 <http://azadali.blogspot.ae/2015/07/fyi-clarity-on-repeatedly-published.html>

thrust of Mr Ali's argument and wilfully ignored a large body of other content dispelling all notions that he could be considered 'extremist'.

In truth, Mr Ali used a quote from a man called Huthaifa Azzam, son of the scholar Abdullah Azzam, in reference to the Iraq war and the resistance of the Iraqis to the allied attack against Saddam Hussein: *"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."*⁷⁴

This quote was originally a counter to Al-Qaeda's claim of the legitimacy of conducting terrorist attacks on foreign soil. What the above quote is attempting to demonstrate is that the only correct arena for combat is the territory in which that war is taking place. In other words, regardless of whom the enemy is, fighters and soldiers should be protected and respected when they are not in the specified territory of war as they are no longer enemy combatants. This quote was thus simply illustrating the rules of engagement within jihad which are similar to Article 3 of Chapters III and the IV of the 1949 Geneva Convention relating to the treatment of prisoners of war and to the protection of civilian persons in time of war respectively,⁷⁵ as well as Article 51 of Chapter VII of the UN Charter regarding self-defence in the face of acts of aggression.⁷⁶

Mr Ali proceeded to sue the Mail 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"*. Mr 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 Mr Ali a right of reply to the allegations before they were published in the Sunday paper.

The paper also falsely claimed that Mr Ali has been suspended from his civil service post in the Treasury Department on account of the blogs. In fact, his employers suspended Mr Ali pending investigation after the newspaper announced its intention to publish the story about him, thereby contributing to the Treasury's course of action, not retrospectively reporting it. The investigation mounted by the civil service into Mr Ali's conduct and any possible breach of the Civil Service Code exonerated him of the allegations and he returned to his post in June 2009. The subsequent accusations have centred upon Mr Justice Eady's judgment that Mr Ali's blogs could be construed as *"taking the position that the killing of American and British troops in Iraq would be justified."*

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ "Convention (IV) Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War", August 12, 1949, *The Avalon Project*, accessed 11.12.2017, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/geneva07.asp. And, Convention (III) relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War. Geneva, 12 August 1949. *International Committee of the Red Cross*, accessed 11.12.2017, <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/COM/375-590006?OpenDocument>

⁷⁶ "Chapter VII – Action with respect to Threats to the Peace, Breaches of the Peace, and Acts of Aggression", *Repertory of Practice of United Nations Organs*, accessed 23.01.2018, <http://legal.un.org/repertory/art51.shtml>

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

The article also claims that Mr Ali "lost the libel hearing" on this issue. In truth, he was not able to defend himself in full libel hearing as Mr Justice Eady acceded to the Defendant's application for summary judgment.⁷⁷

Azad Ali has since clarified the real meaning of his blog post on numerous occasions. We report here his answer in full:

"I have never called for the killing of British troops. 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.'"

Compare this original statement from Huthaifa Azzam (as also quoted by Mary Fitzgerald in the Irish Times)⁷⁸ 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."* Crucially, this quote differs from the original and fails to qualify the first part of the statement. As Ali explains:

"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?"

Finally, it is worth noting that Mr Ali was reinstated to his post at the Civil Service (Department of HM Treasury) following the internal investigation. It is inconceivable that had he *actually* called for the killing of British soldiers that he would have been reinstated to such a role.

⁷⁷ "The Honourable Mr Justice Eady; Between: Azad Ali - And - Associated Newspapers Limited", *One Brick Court*, accessed 23.01.2018, https://www.onebrickcourt.com/files/cases/ali_57141.pdf

⁷⁸ "The son of the father of jihad", *The Irish Times*, accessed 23.01.2018, <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/the-son-of-the-father-of-jihad-1.1027271>

Allegation two: praying for *Mujahideen*

*'Mr Ali chose that platform to lament that anti-terrorism laws made mosques reluctant to pray for Mujahideen.'*⁷⁹

Author: Dominic Kennedy

Time and Date: 12:01, April 10, 2017

Publication: The Times

The above accusation is based on a distorted meaning being attached to Mr Ali's comments, whereby a negative meaning is purposely given to the word *Mujahideen*. The meaning of *Mujahid*, as intended by Ali and as understood in Islam, is different to the meaning implied within the above accusation. Islamically speaking (and therefore the meaning intended by Ali and the meaning understood by his Muslim audience) a *Mujahid* may refer to someone who fights internal temptation as well as those who are commonly called Freedom Fighters (those who defend their lands from invasions or foreign threats).

While *Mujahideen* is commonly used to refer to those taking part in armed struggles, it must be emphasised that even in an armed struggle, there are strict rules on behaviour, which do not allow the killing of innocents. Historically, many *Mujahideen* fought alongside the British and allied forces to defeat our enemies, most famously during the Soviet War in Afghanistan in 1979-1989 and, more recently, to fight ISIS in Syria. To therefore infer that Azad is supporting anti-British combatants would be completely misguided.

In the words of Mr Ali: *"In my short speech I was talking about self-censorship and how something that wasn't illegal, as advised by the MET police during 2006 when the 'glorification of terrorism' legislation was being debated, had spooked the Muslim community into a greater degree of censorship out of fear of falling foul of the law. I categorically denounce, violence and terrorism, including terrorist acts carried out by the so called Islamic State. My reference to Mujahideen here was to those engaged in legitimate struggles for freedom, like the Free Syrian Army and others whom our government has supported in their struggle to rid themselves of an undemocratic, brutal regime."*

Allegation: MEND's engagement with 'extremist' speakers

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 whom else may or may not be invited by the organisers, nor what they may or may not say. Locational proximity is not an endorsement of every view held by another individual or group – as is the case with MEND's shared platforms with Cage and other organisations cited in the press.

Concerning specific accusations regarding our relationship with scholars such as Shaykh Abu Eesa Niamatullah and Shaykh Yasir Qadhi, these speakers were involved in activities highlighting the need for Muslims to play an active role in politics and society and the two speakers were there to address this specific topic and this topic alone. We did not provide a platform for the discussion of any other issues and did not indulge views expressed by these speakers.

⁷⁹ Domic Kennedy, "Extremist leads Muslim lobby group", *The Times*, April 10, 2017, accessed 16.11.2017, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/extremist-leads-muslim-lobby-group-7q2hg30zc>

Some in the Muslim community claim there is a theological argument that suggests Muslims should not vote. Respected Islamic scholars (of which Shaykh Abu Eesa Niamatullah and Shaykh Yasir Qadhi are included) have the credentials and authority to denounce this point of view, and promote the counter view that it is important for British Muslims to actively participate in the political process.

Encouraging British Muslims to become actively engaged in politics and media is our *raison d'être* and the purpose behind our seminars and workshops on media and political literacy. On this singular issue of democratic engagement, the authority and respect held by these scholars is a significant resource in promoting political participation within Muslim communities.

Allegation: MEND attempts to alienate other Muslims – such as Mak Chishty, Quilliam Foundation and Tell Mama.

MEND is not a theology based organisation. We concern ourselves with issues that affect all Muslims⁸⁰ (hate crime, employment, education etc.), regardless of religious ideology, sect or background. We – like all organisations operating in any public arena – support the policies and positions advanced in our manifesto and may disagree with the analysis and political positions of others. A healthy democracy calls for healthy debate. Perhaps the accusation here is that we do not always agree with those that our opponents would like us to.

However, it is useful to remember that policies of only engaging with those who already agree with you are not likely to foster change or fresh ideas. As previously mentioned, engagement does not mean agreement on every issue, but it does mean working together to tackle issues of mutual interest and concern. Once again, as per the Citizens UK report,⁸¹ if the Government truly intends to tackle issues affecting Muslim communities, it is essential that it engages with a wider spectrum of organisations – and, considering MEND's grassroots support, that includes MEND.

Regarding our opposition to some of the views expressed by the aforementioned individuals and groups, our main concern with these organisations that receive government funding - or have received government funding in the past – is that they are not free from political agendas, and thus cannot truly represent Muslim communities as they are forced to work within government narratives. To honestly represent any community, organisations must be able to criticise and debate freely for the benefit of those they claim to represent. Indeed, the above groups and individuals have a troubling record if their purpose is to represent British Muslim communities.⁸²

This does not mean we are fundamentally opposed to Government funding, rather, we believe that when funding is received, it should be transparently declared so that people can judge whether – or to what extent – the recipients are capable of espousing views representative of the communities they purport to represent. Too often, there is the risk that organisations

⁸⁰ and indeed, many non-Muslims

⁸¹ See "The Missing Muslims, *Citizens UK*, accessed 16.11.2017, http://www.citizensuk.org/missing_muslims

⁸² See, "MEND's response to Andrew Gilligan", MEND, accessed 16.11.2017, <http://mend.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/MENDs-response-to-Andrew-Gilligan.pdf> See also, "Mak Chishty lashes out at British Muslims" MEND, June 13, 2017, accessed 16.11.2017, <https://mend.org.uk/news/mak-chishty-lashes-british-muslims/>

become mere mouthpieces for the views that their financial backers wish to be expressed. It is difficult to speak truth to power when you are biting the hand that feeds you.

Mak Chishty

Mak Chishty

Mak Chishty has been outspoken since his retirement from the Metropolitan Police. He has called on Muslims to do more to challenge extremists and in June 2017 he criticised MEND and the terrorist support group Cage. This elicited a [furious response](#) from MEND. Note that it includes an implicit defence of Cage, which is closely linked to MEND:

Chishty makes the wild accusation that “Without targeting Islamism and naming and shaming Muslim organisations such as Cage and Muslim Engagement and Development (Mend), we risk having our safety and security threatened forever.” To even begin to speculate on this nonsensical claim would be to give it credence that it does not deserve. However, we would challenge Chishty to produce evidence to support such an assertion.

The statement also provides another example of MEND’s isolation tactic:

Considering Chishty’s previous reputation, something that he should bear in mind is that he can only further isolate himself from much of the Muslim community with myopic, one-sided analyses that are unsupported by evidence and target a community already feeling stigmatised, vulnerable and under pressure.

Author: David Toube (AKA habibi)

Time and Date: 22:10, October 24, 2017

Publication: Harry’s Place

We reject this allegation on the basis that it deliberately distorts our criticism of Mr Chishty on this occasion. The implication of the allegation is that our opposition is to his commitment to challenging extremism. However, in reality our response was in connection to his implication that MEND is an Islamist organisation, and our criticism was directed towards his dangerous generalisations and policy prescriptions regarding mosques and universities.

Mak Chishty has an unfortunate history of controversial and anti-Muslim comments, which have been both misleading and harmful. MEND’s response was aimed at challenging these controversial views. Indeed, it should be remembered that Mak Chishty claimed in 2015 that Muslims who stop shopping at Marks & Spencer could have been radicalised, without offering any credible evidence to support his view.⁸³

Following the London Bridge attack of June 2017, Mr Chishty was invited to speak about terrorism and radicalisation at the Think Tank Reform, where he stated that “the dangers lie within mosques”,⁸⁴ a stance that echoed his previous suggestion to offer guidelines to “Muslim scholars, academics and other professionals... to ensure that freedom of religious

⁸³ “Muslims who stop shopping at Marks & Spencer could be radicals, warns top cop”, *The Telegraph*, May 24, 2015, accessed 16.11.2017, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/11627620/Muslims-who-stop-shopping-at-Marks-and-Spencer-could-be-radicals-warns-top-cop.html>

⁸⁴ See “The challenge of policing violent extremism”, *PSCP TV*, accessed 23.01.2018, <https://www.pscp.tv/w/11DGLjMDEBqxm>

expression is in line with our British values.”⁸⁵ MEND criticised such a view on the basis that it was contrary to the Home Office Select Committee report “Roots of Violent Radicalisation”, in which it is clearly stated that “violent radicalisation in mosques or other religious institutions comprises ‘no more than 1 % or 2 %’ of the total cases of radicalisation”.⁸⁶ Likewise, the report also found “a much less direct link” between universities and radicalisation than it was originally thought.⁸⁷

Over 110 individuals and organisations representative of the British Muslim community signed MEND’s response letter to Mak Chishty’s insinuations.⁸⁸ In a similar fashion, the Islamic Human Rights Council and over 50 prominent Muslim activists – representing a wide political and theological spectrum of British Muslims – have also signed open letters to the Metropolitan Police Commissioner denouncing Mak Chishty’s comments and condemning his conflation of traditional Islamic beliefs and legitimate political activism with extremism.⁸⁹

We would also like to take this opportunity to highlight the extensive relationship that Chishty held with senior figures of MEND prior to his retirement from the MET Police – a relationship that Chishty failed to disclose in his commentary on MEND. During the months leading up to his departure from the MET police, Chishty met and collaborated closely with MEND’s officials in a series of documented emails and meetings. Within these meetings and communications, he heartily praised MEND for its work and professionalism, and even discussed ways in which MEND and the Metropolitan Police Department could collaborate more closely in our joint efforts of tackling Islamophobia.

However, after he announced his retirement from the MET, it seems that Chishty began working closely with some of the organisations that he had previously strongly criticised during his discussions with MEND; inevitably turning against MEND and implying that we are a security risk. As a consequence of this sudden change, many believe that Chishty’s behaviour and comments regarding MEND were ‘politically motivated’ and intended to appease certain right-leaning groups within the Conservative party in the interest of furthering his own career.

The truth in Chishty’s motivations and convictions can only be known by himself, however, his praise for MEND at a time when his interests lay purely in policing and not in any possible ulterior political motives are clearly evidenced in his previous correspondence with us.

⁸⁵ Mak Chishty, “We must reclaim Islam from extremists, says Muslim Met commander”, June 11, 2017, accessed 12.12.2017 <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/edition/news/we-must-reclaim-islam-from-extremists-says-met-commander-0fjsdzbn3>

⁸⁶ “Roots of violent radicalisation”, House of Commons Home Affairs Committee, Nineteenth Report of Session 2010–12 Volume I, p. 15, accessed 12.12.2017, <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmhaff/1446/1446.pdf>

⁸⁷ Ibid, 49

⁸⁸ “Muslim Police Chief Challenged”, *The Times*, accessed 12.12.2017, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/edition/comment/letters-to-the-editor-nk6jpf962>

⁸⁹ See 5Pillars, “Muslim activists denounce Mak Chishty’s call to monitor Muslim children,” 5Pillars, May 28, 2015, accessed November 20, 2017, <http://5pillarsuk.com/2015/05/27/muslim-activists-denounce-mak-chishtys-call-to-monitor-muslim-children/>. See also, “IHRC condemn Mak Chishty’s comments in open letter to Police Commissioner,” 5Pillars, May 26, 2015, accessed November 20, 2017, <http://5pillarsuk.com/2015/05/26/ihrc-condemn-mak-chishtys-comments-in-open-letter-to-police-commissioner/>.

The Quilliam Foundation

The Quilliam Foundation

Special loathing is reserved for the Quilliam Foundation. The MEND campaign of hatred goes all the way back to the last decade, when MEND was known as “Engage”. In a **typical attack** from 2009, Quilliam is dismissed as a sinister government project designed to control Muslims:

As for the Quilliam Foundation which received around £1 million according to this investigation in The Times, its legitimacy as an organization has always been non-existent. The organization is widely recognised to be nothing more than a government funded social engineering project designed to depoliticize Muslims.

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Author: David Toube (AKA habibi)

Time and Date: 22:10, October 24, 2017

Publication: Harry's Place

MEND has voiced its concerns about the Quilliam Foundation after learning of some highly dubious practices that we believe severely damage its credibility.

Founded in 2007, the Quilliam Foundation claims to be a Muslim counter-extremism think-tank with the explicit goal of removing the “poison of Islamism” from British Muslim discourse and promoting a peaceful, spiritual form of Islam which is at ease with the modern Western world. In the following years, the Quilliam Foundation received around £1million per year; Husain and Nawaz (its founders) paid themselves handsome salaries,⁹¹ expanded the organisation and were a regular feature of BBC studios and right-wing newspaper columns.

A useful resource in understanding the actual operation of many government-funded organisations claiming to represent Muslim communities is Nafeez Ahmed's essay “*The Quilliam Foundation is financed by Tea-Party conservatives*”.⁹² It demonstrates that the Quilliam Foundation, for example, receives funds from the John Templeton Foundation, which “*is part of a network of extreme right-wing Christian philanthropists who fund anti-Muslim, homophobic and misogynist bigotry*”.⁹³ It was also strongly criticised by the Home Affairs Select Committee for its association with the highly controversial and Islamophobic ‘Gatestone Institute’, which is founded and presided over by the “*sugar-mama of anti-Muslim hate*” Nina Rosenwald.

⁹⁰ “MEND and Parliament – This is no way to help Muslims”, *Harry's Place*, October 24, 2017, accessed 16.11.2017 <http://hurryupharry.org/2017/10/24/mend-and-parliament-this-is-no-way-to-help-muslims/>

⁹¹ “Government gives £1m to anti extremist think tank Quilliam Foundation”, *The Times*, January 20, 2009, accessed 12.12.2017, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/government-gives-pound1m-to-anti-extremist-think-tank-quilliam-foundation-h2fzrg8lxcc>

⁹² Nafeez Ahmed, “The Quilliam Foundation is financed by Tea-Party conservatives investigated by Sam Harris”, *Insurgence Intelligence*, accessed 16.11.2017, <https://medium.com/insurge-intelligence/the-quilliam-foundation-is-financed-by-tea-party-conservatives-investigated-by-sam-harris-1e43d54f0bee>

⁹³ Ibid.

The Quilliam Foundation has received harsh criticism from the British Muslim community and suffers from a complete lack of grassroots support.⁹⁴ During its work, they have attacked countless active Muslim groups, whilst simultaneously largely ignoring or minimizing the impact of British foreign policy.

Other issues include, for example, the Quilliam Foundation's links to Tommy Robinson. According to Robinson (whose real name is Stephen Yaxley-Lennon), in a deal coordinated by the Quilliam Foundation, he was paid thousands of pounds to leave the English Defence League so that the organisation could take "credit" for his resignation. Robinson later stated that the Quilliam Foundation has "no credibility" and is "more despised by Muslims than I was".⁹⁵ Robinson is now aligned with Pegida UK – a clear indication that Quilliam never succeeded in de-radicalising him.

Furthermore, in labelling so many Muslims as 'extremists' or 'Islamists',⁹⁶ the Quilliam Foundation has played a pivotal role in the way in which Muslims are viewed by the Government, and also within public opinion generally; particularly the way in which Muslims are viewed almost exclusively through the lens of security and counter-terrorism.

Since its UK government funding ceased in 2012, the organisation has also been heavily criticised and exposed by Parliament's Home Affairs Select Committee for its involvement with anti-Muslim organisation the Gatestone Institute. In addressing the Quilliam Foundation during the hearing, Chuka Umunna MP told Haras Rafiq: *"The problem is with this Gatestone Institute, Mr Rafiq, is that it's not just these Steven Emerson and also Robert Spencer, it's just the general tone of what they carry... I just wonder what on earth an organisation like your own is doing associating with and signing statements organised by an organisation like the Gatestone Institute"*.⁹⁷

There is also concern with the way in which the organisation has attempted to alter Islamic teachings and beliefs – seemingly to diminish the practice of Islam within daily life. For example, members of the Quilliam Foundation have previously issued a fatwa (religious ruling) saying Muslims do not have to fast for the whole day in Ramadan – a ruling that seems to go directly against the opinions of virtually every credible Muslim scholar in the UK.⁹⁸

As such, there is grave distrust amongst British Muslims who do not feel that the Quilliam Foundation is an appropriate representative of their identity and interests.

⁹⁴ See James Fergusson, "Al-Britannia, My Country: A Journey Through Muslim Britain", (London: Bantam Press, an imprint of Transworld Publishers, part of Penguin Random House: 2017).

⁹⁵ "Tommy Robinson, Former EDL Leader, Claims Quilliam Paid Him To Quit Far-Right Group", *The Huffington Post*, December 4, 2015, accessed 23.01.2018, http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2015/12/03/tommy-robinson-claims-quilliam-paid-him-to-leave-edl_n_8710834.html

⁹⁶ "How Did Maajid Nawaz End Up on a List of 'Anti-Muslim Extremists'?", *The Atlantic*, October 29, 2016, accessed 12.12.2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2016/10/maajid-nawaz-splc-anti-muslim-extremist/505685/>

⁹⁷ "Home Affairs Committee, Tuesday 1 December 2015 Meeting started at 2.14pm, ended 5.24pm, 16:10:36," *Parliament TV*, accessed 12.12.2017 <http://parliamentlive.tv/Event/Index/f2a86e88-262c-44b7-8a94-40f1dd936cad>

⁹⁸ "Fatwa on fasting in Ramadan during the UK summer", *Unity*, June 18, 2015, accessed 23.01.2018, <https://unity1.wordpress.com/2014/06/30/fatwa-on-fasting-in-ramadan-during-the-uk-summer/>

Considering the fact that the Quilliam Foundation has been heavily criticised by other organisations,⁹⁹ Muslim groups,¹⁰⁰ politicians,¹⁰¹ television channels,¹⁰² Scotland Yard's Muslim Contact Unit,¹⁰³ and even the Home Affairs Select Committee, our criticism of the organisation is not in any way unique or unsubstantiated.

Furthermore, as we benefit from the largest grassroots support and community recognition of any Muslim organisation in the UK, we are in a unique position to voice the discontent of many British Muslims with the organisation's activities.

Tell MAMA

*"Naturally Fiyaz Mughal's Tell Mama hatred monitoring group is another MEND target"*¹⁰⁴

Author: David Toubé (AKA habibi)

Time and Date: 22:10, October 24, 2017

Publication: Harry's Place

Tell MAMA claims to be a Muslim organisation recording attacks on Muslims. When it was founded it appeared to be playing a vital role in filling a vacuum in the reporting of Islamophobic instances.

However, MEND has criticised Tell MAMA after learning of some of its disturbing associations and practices. For example, the current President of Tell MAMA is Richard Benson, who has a long history of defending Israel's actions in Palestine. Considering the feelings of the huge majority of British Muslims on the situation in Palestine, the appointment of Mr Benson to director of an organisation that purports to represent British Muslims is equivalent to appointing George Galloway as director of an organisation representing British Jews. It is an issue of an inappropriate representation of interests.

Tell MAMA has also cooperated with Andrew Gilligan in slandering Baroness Sayeeda Warsi, accusing her of handing *"official posts to people linked to Islamist groups"*. The source for Gilligan's piece was Fiyaz Mughal, head of Tell MAMA.¹⁰⁵

Furthermore, Tell MAMA has captured only a tiny percentage of Islamophobic incidents in recent years, while the data they do possess has been heavily discredited by mainstream press as 'inaccurate' leading to claims over Tell MAMA lying about its data.¹⁰⁶

⁹⁹ Nafeez Ahmed, "White supremacists at the heart of Whitehall", *Middle East Eye*, March 6, 2015, accessed 12.12.2017, <http://www.middleeasteye.net/columns/white-supremacists-heart-whitehall-789183852>

¹⁰⁰ "Quilliam Foundation: Never has a British Muslim organisation been more reviled", *5PillarsUK*, October 9, 2013, accessed 12.12.2017, <https://5pillarsuk.com/2013/10/09/quilliam-foundation-never-has-a-british-muslim-organisation-been-more-reviled/>

¹⁰¹ "List sent to terror chief aligns peaceful Muslim groups with terrorist ideology", *The Guardian*, August 4, 2010, accessed 12.12.2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2010/aug/04/quilliam-foundation-list-alleged-extremism>

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ "MEND and Parliament...", <http://hurryupharry.org/2017/10/24/mend-and-parliament-this-is-no-way-to-help-muslims/>

¹⁰⁵ Andrew Gilligan, "Islamic 'radicals' at the heart of Whitehall", *The Telegraph*, February 22, 2015, accessed 13.12.2017, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/11427370/Islamic-radicals-at-the-heart-of-Whitehall.html>

¹⁰⁶ Andrew Gilligan, "Muslim hate monitor to lose backing", *The Telegraph*, June 9, 2013, accessed 17.11.2017, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/journalists/andrew-gilligan/10108098/Muslim-hate-monitor-to-lose-backing.html>

For example, Home Office statistics on religious hate crime show 3,254 hate crimes between 2013/14 to 2014/15 and 2,273 hate crimes between 2012/13 and 2013/14. Tell MAMA recorded a paltry 146 in 2014-15 and 436 from Jan to Dec 2015 (and their data includes crimes AND incidents, so actual criminal cases are less than 436) Similarly, Tell MAMA recorded 2,840 Islamophobic crimes and incidents for 2015/16,¹⁰⁷ while MEND's own estimates take this figure up to 6,816. Just like in previous years, Tell MAMA's underreporting of Islamophobic incidents makes it a redundant organization beyond providing the Government with an 'acceptable face' for the Muslim community.

Fiyaz Mughal, the previous head of Tell MAMA, has also publicly lied under parliamentary privilege about mainstream Muslims organisations, including MEND, and made accusations which we have previously responded to¹⁰⁸ and which are countered throughout this current document. Talking about MEND, Fiyaz Mughal claimed that *"those groups also have some sway in this house, and it is extremely troubling, it is extremely troubling in our society to come across mindsets that live in our country, that promote this absolute nonsense that corrode communities and who give that absolute view to extremists beyond the Muslim community that all Muslims are like that."*¹⁰⁹ Considering the gravity of the accusations, it was MEND's right and responsibility to respond to them.

As previously mentioned, the Quilliam Foundation is an organisation heavily criticised by large segments of British Muslims. However, instead of distancing themselves from the Quilliam Foundation, Tell MAMA has previously demonstrated their close association with them, even choosing the Quilliam Foundation to host the launch of their annual report in 2014.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ "A Constructed Threat: Identity, Intolerance and the Impact of Anti-Muslim Hatred", *Tell MAMA 2016 annual report*, p.7, accessed 13.12.2017, <https://tellmamauk.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/A-Constructed-Threat-Identity-Intolerance-and-the-Impact-of-Anti-Muslim-Hatred-Web.pdf>

¹⁰⁸ "MEND responds to libellous and defamatory attacks by Tell MAMA", *MEND*, undated, accessed 23.01.2018, https://mend.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/HASC151216_MEND-1.pdf

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ "Tell Mama is nearing its sell-by date", *5PillarsUK*, January 7, 2016, accessed 17.11.2017, <http://5pillarsuk.com/2016/01/07/tell-mama-is-nearing-its-sell-by-date/>

Significantly, not only has Tell MAMA been criticised by media outlets such as *The Telegraph*,¹¹¹ for its poor records – which incidentally appears to have cost the organisation its government funding – but it is also strongly ostracised by the community. In a recent fundraising attempt, Tell MAMA reportedly raised a meagre £57.¹¹² Considering the fact that Muslims have been proven to be the largest charitable givers in Britain, their reluctance to donate to Tell MAMA is perhaps the best indicator of its distance from the community.



TellMAMAUK
@TellMamaUK

For those who promote a view that Islam or #Muslims are under threat, LOOK at how many non-Muslims stand with you against @POTUS. Enough of the victimisation narrative, be someone and engage with your local communities. #No2h8November

29/11/2017, 22:25

8 Retweets 17 Likes

As another example of Tell MAMA's disconnect from Muslim communities, they were recently forced to apologise after a Tweet against Muslims' alleged "victim mentality". This comment was made in the face of proven rising rates of anti-Muslim hate crime, and from an

organisation that itself claims to be an authoritative force in the fight against Islamophobia.

Tweets from our account last night were unbecoming of the standards we set for ourselves as an organisation dedicated to challenging this form of bigotry. The wording was unacceptable and we acknowledge how this has caused many a great deal of upset and in subsequent tweets. For that, we apologise profusely.

Ultimately, as 5Pillars Deputy Editor, Dilly Hussain, concludes; *"The reality is, large swathes of British Muslims simply do not trust Tell Mama because they are perceived as a convenient policy arm of the establishment, who appear to have hijacked the Islamophobia agenda."*¹¹³

As stated earlier in this document, our main concern with these organisations is that they are inevitably tied to political agendas and thus cannot truly represent Muslim communities as they are forced to work within government narratives. To honestly represent any community, organisations must be able to criticise and debate freely for the benefit of those they claim to represent.

Allegation: Undermining counter-terror efforts

When it comes to criticism of current UK counter-terror strategies, certain groups often present legitimate criticism of the development, implementation and impact of such strategies as an attempt to "undermine" government efforts. We firmly believe that government policies in all areas should be open to critical review for the benefit of ensuring their effectiveness and monitoring any unintended consequences such strategies may have.

¹¹¹ Andrew Gilligan, "Muslim hate monitor to lose...", <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/journalists/andrew-gilligan/10108098/Muslim-hate-monitor-to-lose-backing.html>

¹¹² "Tell Mama's Reformist Agenda – Measuring Anti-Muslim Attacks Or Measured Attacks On Muslims?", *Coolnessofhind*, March 23, 2014, accessed 05.01.2018, <https://coolnessofhind.wordpress.com/2014/03/23/tell-mamas-reformist-agenda-measuring-anti-muslim-attacks-or-measured-attacks-on-muslims/>

¹¹³ "Tell Mama is nearing its sell-by date" ..., <http://5pillarsuk.com/2016/01/07/tell-mama-is-nearing-its-sell-by-date/>

It is useful to clarify MEND's position regarding the UK's current counter-terror strategies.

- We agree with the overarching aim of CONTEST and that a counter-terror strategy is necessary
- However, we cannot fully endorse the individual strands of PURSUE, PROTECT and PREPARE of the CONTEST strategy without transparency and access to the evidence underpinning their implementation and application. To endorse them without an understanding of this evidence would be irresponsible. The latter does not at all conclude that we are against PURSUE, PROTECT and PREPARE but rather that we just haven't been privy to the information needed to determine our view on these.
- We accept that there may be a small number of cases where PREVENT may have played a role in countering radicalisation in a small number of cases. However, we would argue that these cases could have been dealt with through existing safeguarding measures, without the need for PREVENT.
- We firmly believe that the PREVENT strategy is currently unfit for purpose and is in need of immediate independent review. We argue that this review must engage with Muslim communities and mainstream organisations such as MEND, the Muslim Council of Britain and others.

The allegation that MEND works to undermine the Government's counter-terror efforts is a misrepresentation of our vocal concern with PREVENT – concerns that have also been raised by two special rapporteurs to the UN, the NUT, the NUS, the former Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation, Rights Watch UK, the Open Society Justice Initiative, and more than 140 academics, politicians and experts in a single letter alone.

In line with the aforementioned individuals and organisations, our criticism of PREVENT includes (but not limited to) the following concerns:

1. **PREVENT has no evidentiary basis:** The research underpinning the ERG22+ risk factors that form the basis of PREVENT was research conducted on a small group of al-Qaeda prisoners. The use of this small sample to extrapolate conclusions has been repeatedly criticised and has not undergone any peer-review process to account for its validity.
2. **The PREVENT strategy focuses unduly heavily on ideology without consideration of other factors influencing radicalisation:** Prevent does not account properly for the impact of mental health issues, foreign policy, isolation, unemployment, socio-economic deprivation or a whole host of other factors that could lead an individual to radicalisation.
3. **PREVENT has no workable definitions:** At present, the Government has no clear working definition of extremism, non-violent extremism, British Values nor radicalisation. With roughly 600,000 WRAP-trained staff attempting to identify radicalisation with a view to tackling extremism, this lack of objective understanding causes confusion in PREVENT's application.
4. **PREVENT delivery officers rely on inadequate training:** Considering that counter-terror is such an important component of public safety and that it possesses a potential

to impact people in severe ways if not applied correctly, it is imperative that the training provided is of the highest quality. However, at present, some PREVENT delivery officers receive only 45-60mins of training to identify signs of radicalisation (which, as previously mentioned, are based on flawed science in themselves). Equally worrying is the fact that there appears to be no formative or summative examination nor on-going assessment for PREVENT officers. Such a lack of unregulated quality assurance for procedures would never be tolerated as 'good practice' in any other workspace.

5. **Unacceptable levels of collateral damage:** The lack of an evidentiary basis combined with poor training has led to dozens of cases where Muslims have been falsely implicated as being at risk of radicalisation. Indeed, recent figures suggest that 95% of individuals referred to PREVENT are not judged as in need of Channel support.¹¹⁴ Home Office data indicates that 5,000 individuals were referred to PREVENT for 'Islamist extremism', in 2015-16.¹¹⁵ Assuming all of those referred for 'Islamist extremism' were Muslim, this means that roughly 1 in 500 Muslims were referred to Prevent during the year. A conservative estimate of the proportion of the White population referred for far-right concerns is less than 1 in 60,000, making the likelihood of a Muslim being referred for 'Islamist extremism' more than 110 times the likelihood of a White individual being referred for 'far-right extremism' to the programme.

Ultimately, far from attempting to undermine counter-terror efforts, all of our recommendations concerning counter-terror legislation generally and PREVENT legislation specifically has an emphasis on constructive engagement in devising effective strategies which work with Muslim communities. *MEND firmly believes that, as British citizens, we all have a desire and duty to keep our country safe and protect our way of life. Our engagement in this area is therefore an attempt to ensure that our counter-terror strategies are as effective as they can be for the benefit of all.*

Allegation: MEND's removal from the APPG

"Mend is the new name for a group, Iengage, which was removed as administrative support to the all-party parliamentary group on Islamophobia for its links to extremism".¹¹⁶

Author: Andrew Gilligan

Time and Date: 22:00, March 7, 2015

Publication: The Telegraph

The All Party Parliamentary Group on Islamophobia established in 2010 was marred by some controversy after a campaign was launched to deprive us of the status of Secretariat on the basis of a number of unfounded accusations.

¹¹⁴ "Only 5% of people referred to Prevent extremism scheme get specialist help", *The Guardian*, November 9, 2017, accessed 23.01.2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/nov/09/only-5-of-people-referred-to-prevent-extremism-scheme-get-specialist-help>

¹¹⁵ Individuals referred to and supported through the Prevent Programme, April 2015 to March 2016," Home Office, November 09, 2017, <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/individuals-referred-to-and-supported-through-the-prevent-programme-april-2015-to-march-2016>.

¹¹⁶ Andrew Gilligan, "Extremism in Britain: Now the Crackdown is launched", *The Telegraph*, March 7, 2015, accessed 23.01.2018, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/terrorism-in-the-uk/11457174/Extremism-in-Britain-Now-the-crackdown-is-launched.html>

According to Andrew Gilligan, we were allegedly removed from our position due to defence of extremists. Mr Gilligan himself has unfortunately since been exposed and disgraced for some of his unsavoury journalistic practices,¹¹⁷ and indeed in this instance, has never provided any proof of his accusations and they have been repeatedly proven inaccurate.¹¹⁸

In reality, our removal as secretariat to the APPG was the result of an insidious campaign waged by the Jewish Chronicle and other groups – groups which we believe were opposed to our advocating for Palestinian human rights.

We were removed from the APPG in July 2011 after a group of Conservative MPs turned up in force to secure our removal, having previously failed in an earlier attempt in January 2011. At the time, Conservative MP, Sir Peter Bottomley, spoke in our defence and called on those who attempt to frustrate our work to recognise it for what it is and “face their own demons”.

Allegation: Using a verse from the Qur’an in our fundraising

“MEND relies on donations for funding and online it quotes the Koran saying: 'And whatsoever you spend of anything (in Allah's Cause), He will replace it'”¹¹⁹

Author: Martin Robinson

Time and Date: 13:03, April 10, 2017

Publication: Daily Mail (Mail Online)

This is allegation that appeared in an article by Martin Robinson in the Daily Mail. It is difficult to locate the actual accusation being made in this statement, however, the general context and overall tone of Robinson’s piece implies that this reference to the Qur’an is somehow morally dubious.

MEND is a community-funded organisation that seeks to encourage political, civic and social engagement within British Muslim communities through empowering British Muslims to effectively interact with political and media institutions.

MEND relies entirely on funding and donations from the community. The rationale of this decision ought to be found in our desire to maintain the most impartial view on government policies that might impact the British Muslim community. We firmly believe that by relying on the donations generously made by the community, we can better achieve our goal of fully and truly representing them, without incurring in the potential risk of having to subscribe to a particular political agenda, or being tied to donors who do not belong to the community we seek to empower.

The intended impression the Daily Mail is attempting to create in quoting our use of the Qu’ranic verse is unclear. If Robinson is attempting to expose MEND as a Muslim organisation reliant upon donations justified by religious requirements of charitable giving – this is completely accurate. Giving alms is one of the Five Pillars of Islam, and charity is highly

¹¹⁷ For a background on Andrew Gilligan’s journalistic credentials, see “The Truth about a Liar”, MEND, accessed 23.01.2018, <http://mend.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/The-truth-about-a-liar-Andrew-Gilligan.pdf>

¹¹⁸ See “MEND’s response to Andrew Gilligan”, MEND, accessed 17.11.2017, <http://mend.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/MENDs-response-to-Andrew-Gilligan.pdf>

¹¹⁹ “Islamist who claimed killing British soldiers was ‘justified’ becomes director of a controversial Muslim pressure group with influence over Westminster”, *The Daily Mail*, April 10, 2017, accessed 17.11.2017, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4396832/Islamist-head-Muslim-pressure-group.html>

encouraged. There is nothing sinister about this, nor anything that sets MEND aside from many other charitable organisations funded by religious communities.

Allegation: MEND uses a logo similar to the jihadist hand signal adopted by Islamic State

Mr Ali's organisation, 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. ¹²⁰

Author: Dominic Kennedy

Time and Date: 12:01, April 10, 2017

Publication: The Times

In this case, Kennedy is attempting to create a false image and manufacture a fabricated ideological link between MEND and violent extremism by positioning incomplete facts. 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 spreading awareness of the impact 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.

MEND responded to this (tragically laughable) allegation by sharing this graphic... Kennedy should perhaps immediately conduct a project of investigative journalism into Da'esh's insidious grasp that has led to their jihadist hand signal being adopted by Donald Trump, the Dalai Lama and even the Queen.

Needless to say, MEND totally abhors and condemns the murderous cult of Da'esh on no uncertain terms.

¹²⁰ Dominic Kennedy, "Extremist leads Muslim lobby group" ..., <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/extremist-leads-muslim-lobby-group-7q2hg30zc>

Allegation: Targeting the NSPCC

The Times also claims that Mend targeted the NSPCC and used social media to send them angry messages because the children's charity set up a hotline for families to report children if they feared they were being radicalised.¹²¹

Author: Martin Robinson

Time and Date: 13:03, April 10, 2017

Publication: Daily Mail (Mail Online)

The depiction of abovementioned tweets as 'angry' is misleading, and merely a literary instrument by which the Times attempted to paint MEND as an illogical aggressor against a children's charity. In reality, the tweets highlighted a significant problem concerning the Government's counter-terrorism strategies and the way they impact the lives of young children.

Our argument was that if the NSPCC were to become an arm of the PREVENT agenda, vulnerable Muslim children could become scared to contact them for fear of being drawn into the PREVENT apparatus. The NSPCC plays an important role in safeguarding vulnerable children and we strongly believe that their services should remain confidential to encourage all children who are in need.

MEND Community @mendcommunity
.@NSPCC use postersto push surveillance state further into people's lives
[bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales- ...](http://bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-...) #EndPrevent



12:22 PM - 31 Aug 2016

6 Retweets

CAGE, Spinwatch, Rob McDowall and 3 others

4 6 1 1

- MEND Community** @mendcommunity · 31 Aug 2016
Replying to @mendcommunity
One NSPCC poster includes a 'sign of radicalisation' - "asking inappropriate questions" - what are inappropriate questions?? #EndPrevent
2 1 1 1
- MEND Community** @mendcommunity · 31 Aug 2016
It is even more alarming that 80% of referrals of "radicalised children" to authorities are false positives.
1 1 1 1
- MEND Community** @mendcommunity · 31 Aug 2016
Can @NSPCC reveal identities of trainers & expertise? Suddenly, NGO set up to deal with children's issues to spot 'signs of radicalisation'?
1 1 1 1
- MEND Community** @mendcommunity · 31 Aug 2016
What @NSPCC will do to its reputation if it becomes complicit in alienation of young British Muslims? #EndPrevent
1 1 1 1
- MEND Community** @mendcommunity · 31 Aug 2016
What help @NSPCC has offered to children who were falsely referred to Channel?
1 1 1 1
- MEND Community** @mendcommunity · 31 Aug 2016
Surely NSPCC should be focused on the damage PREVENT is causing Muslim children via counselling, instead of pushing out PREVENT.
1 1 1 1
- MEND Community** @mendcommunity · 31 Aug 2016
Tackling the lure of violent extremism can only be done by working with communities, not against them. #EndPrevent
1 1 1 1

¹²¹ "Islamist who claimed killing...", <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4396832/Islamist-head-Muslim-pressure-group.html>

Allegations against Mr Azad Ali

While the accusations regarding the killing of British troops and the Mujahideen have been addressed above, the following chapter covers the remaining accusations against Mr Azad Ali.

Mr Ali recently resigned from his position at MEND. His last day at MEND was the 31st December 2017.

Allegation: Anwar al-Awlaki

Other avowed Mend democrats include Azad Ali, the group's head of community development and engagement, who has written of his "love" for Anwar al-Awlaki, the al-Qaeda recruiter.¹²²

Author: Andrew Gilligan

Time and Date: 7:00, March 22, 2015

Publication: The Telegraph

The point that is missing from this accusation is that these comments were made while Anwar al-Awlaki was still a respected scholar and before his shift to al-Qaeda. At the time, Al-Awlaki was a fully integrated member of the outreach initiatives undertaken by the US Government after 9/11, participating in various programmes and attending a lunch at the US Department of Defence.

The suggestion that Ali was expressing "love" for a man who later became an al-Qaeda recruiter and hunted by the US for his part in radicalising Muslims to commit acts of terror ignores the period in which the comments were made by Mr Ali and the trajectory of Al-Awlaki's shift to radicalisation.

There was a period in which Al-Awlaki was feted by American politicians as a model American Muslim. Al-Awlaki's reputation as an Islamic scholar in this period was appreciated by a wide section of American and Muslim communities. His later turn to radicalisation has been rejected by Muslim communities on both sides of the Atlantic. Al-Awlaki attributed his detention in a Yemeni facility and his subsequent torture, as having been instructed by the US government. It is alleged that his incarceration and subsequent mistreatment resulted in his radicalisation.

Regardless of the causes of Al-Awlaki's eventual shift to violent extremism, Ali made his remarks about Al-Awlaki when the latter was still a respected Muslim scholar who advocated Muslim integration and civic responsibility.

Allegation: Mumbai attacks, 2008

Mr Ali "said that the Mumbai attacks were "not terrorism""¹²³

¹²² Andrew Gilligan, "The baroness, Islamic extremists and a question of free speech", *The Telegraph*, March 22, 2015 accessed 15.12.2017, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/11488175/The-baroness-Islamic-extremists-and-a-question-of-free-speech.html>

¹²³ Ibid.

Author: Andrew Gilligan

Time and Date: 7:00, March 22, 2015

Publication: The Telegraph

This particular claim rests on a comment Mr Ali made in a blog posted after the attack on the Taj Mahal Palace Hotel and other sites in Mumbai in November 2008 in which 174 people died. Mr Ali was not arguing that the attack was *not* terrorism, rather that it was too early for the facts to be known and that the easy application of the term 'terrorism' has potential repercussions.

Within the blog, Mr Ali condemned the attack in no uncertain terms, but criticised the speed at which the attack was labelled as "terrorism", before the facts of the attack or the motivation of the attack were known.

As such, the comment explored the easy application of the word 'terrorism' to incidents of political violence by the media and highlighted the need for a more judicious approach that presents clearer details of acts of premeditated, organised violence in a way that did not abuse the term. The comment was not intended to underplay the seriousness of the incident or the likelihood of it being an act of organised violence for political ends.

Given the backlash that Muslim communities often face when incidents are reported as terrorism, Ali was making a wider point about language and its responsible use. Padraig Reidy of Index on Censorship makes a similar argument in reflective piece on the Chapel Hill murders in which three American Muslims were shot by a neighbour known to espouse hostile views. Reidy questions whether the gunman, Stephen Hicks, is a "terrorist" writing, *"[N]onetheless it's curious, and depressing, that the ideologically and politically loaded word 'terrorism' must be invoked for any act of violence involving Muslims, even when they are the ones who suffer from it. It's time we were all clearer with our language."*

Ali's comment in relation to the Mumbai attacks was made in much the same vein, raising the issue of whether the term 'terrorism' is overused and less reliable or instructive as a result. It is perhaps indicative of the lengths Ali's detractors have gone to, to engage in character assassination ascribing sinister meaning to legitimate questions that have been explored elsewhere. Questioning the application of certain terminologies is a relatively innocuous exercise when engaged in by others, such as Reidy, but when Muslims question the validity of the term in explaining each and every atrocity, including those of which they are the primary target, they are criticised.

It is also worth pointing out that after the terrorist attacks in London in 2005, Ali worked alongside the Metropolitan Police Service to facilitate co-operation and community confidence at a time of heightened tensions. Ali has been at the forefront of supporting confidence building strategies to improve community policing following the worst terrorist attacks in London.

Allegation: Opposition to democracy

Mr Ali " "stated that "democracy, if it means at the expense of not implementing the Sharia, of course nobody agrees with that""¹²⁴

¹²⁴ Ibid.

Author: Andrew Gilligan

Time and Date: 7:00, March 22, 2015

Publication: The Telegraph

In the words of Mr Ali *"This was broadcast on Channel 4's Dispatches programme, where an undercover reporter followed me around for 8 months according to Channel 4... the secretly filmed scene is of myself with my colleagues broadcasting our live radio show which was being streamed online. The comment was in response to a caller who asked a question about democracy in a Muslim majority country and whether I support it. I answered yes of course and I gave the example of how some of the Muslim rulers were elected in history. The caller then asked would people - that is Muslim people in a Muslim majority country - accept democracy if it didn't implement shari'ah - to which I answered of course they wouldn't."*

As such, Mr Ali's comments were taken out of context. He was not expressing any kind of personal disdain for democracy, or even commenting on British Muslims' perceptions of democracy. Rather, he was making a comment on how people in Muslim-majority countries may approach democratic institutions. **This was not a debate about the UK, nor indeed any country in the Western world.**

Within MEND, political participation of British Muslims is our raison d'être. Our 'Get Out and Vote' campaign and the educational masterclasses we deliver encouraging political engagement have empowered tens of thousands of Muslims to become politically involved in the democratic process. As such, it would be illogical for Mr Ali to dedicate himself to such efforts if he was fundamentally opposed to a democracy that does not implement Shari'ah.

Allegation: Westminster attack

"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".¹²⁵

Author: Dominic Kennedy

Time and date: 12:01, April 10, 2017

Publication: The Times

While Mr Ali has already promptly clarified¹²⁶ that the event was *"a barbarous and cruel act of murder for which there was no possible justification or mitigation"*, his comment ought to be contextualised within the wider, and crucial, debate surrounding the difference between *Terrorism* and *Lone Wolf* attacks, and also within the context of debates surrounding the delicate balance between security and right to privacy.

¹²⁵ Dominic Kennedy, "Extremist leads Muslim lobby group", <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/extremist-leads-muslim-lobby-group-7q2hg30zc>

¹²⁶ "Islamist who claimed killing British soldiers...", <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4396832/Islamist-head-Muslim-pressure-group.html#ixzz4xB60G5fb>



Azad Ali

March 26, 2017 · 6

Look at the Govt trying to invade more of our privacy based on an incident we now know to be a lone Wolf act and not terrorism. 3 points.

1. They can get in to his WhatsApp now.
2. The powers are used for fishing hence infringement of our privacy.
3. Where reasonable suspicion exists there are enough laws to allow it.

Don't believe the hype!

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-39396578>

Khalid Masood, who killed four people in Westminster this week, was reportedly on the messaging app WhatsApp two minutes before the attack.

Police are currently unable to know what was communicated.

Amber Rudd said she would be meeting technology firms this week to ask them to "work with us".

But Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn said there had to be a balance between the "right to know" and "the right to privacy", adding that authorities already had "huge powers" of investigation.

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Mr Ali's Facebook comment on this matter was itself in response to an article from the BBC, which clearly states "*Scotland Yard has said it believes Masood acted alone, and while officers were "determined" to find out whether he had been inspired by terrorist propaganda, it was possible his motive would never be known.*"¹²⁷

Mr Ali commented that the Westminster attack was not terrorism, in the sense of "organised acts co-ordinated by terrorist groups", and at the time, there was no evidence that the attacker was part of a wider terrorist network. As such, Mr Ali was reflecting a view based on several news outlets reported at the time, i.e. that the Metropolitan Police's view was that this was a 'lone wolf' attack.¹²⁸ For the record, Mr Ali accepts that this attack could be described as an act of terrorism in the light of further information that has come to light.¹²⁹

It is important here to stress that Mr Ali's comment was thus referring to the difference between organised terrorist attacks carried out by a cell with links to external terrorist organisations (terrorism) and a lone wolf, which is traditionally described¹³⁰ as someone who operates on their own and is not part of a group, network, or directed by an outside organization. Mr Ali clearly attempted to stress this important difference.

Allegation: Privacy invasion

"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."¹³¹

Author: Dominic Kennedy

Time and date: 12:01, April 10, 2017

¹²⁷ See <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-39396578>

¹²⁸ "Masood was lone wolf, say police", *The Times*, March 26, 2017, accessed 16.11.2017, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/masood-was-lone-wolf-say-met-police-gfn29h3dd>

¹²⁹ "Westminster terror attacker Khalid Masood's final message revealed", *The Telegraph*, April 28, 2017, accessed 16.11.2017, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/04/28/westminster-terror-attacker-khalid-masoods-final-message-revealed/>

¹³⁰ Ramón Spaaij, "The Enigma of Lone Wolf Terrorism: An Assessment", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* Vol. 33, Iss. 9, 2010, accessed 16.11.2017, <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1057610X.2010.501426>

¹³¹ Dominic Kennedy, "Extremist leads Muslim lobby group" ..., <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/extremist-leads-muslim-lobby-group-7q2hg30zc>

Publication: The Times

Once again, the comments made by Mr Ali are attempts to address a crucial question. In fact, the balance between security and civil liberties – and specifically the issue of privacy – has been an ongoing debate for a number of years. The problem is so delicate that a simple google search (i.e. ‘privacy vs security’) results in hundreds of pages filled with opinion, comments, and seemingly endless lists of pros and cons for each side of the argument.

It is not within the scope of this discussion to critically engage with this debate. However, the issue in question that Mr Ali’s comment refers to is the Government’s attempt to gain the power to potentially access users’ private messages.

When asked whether she opposed the use of end-to-end encryption,¹³² Home Secretary Amber Rudd (who has complained that the security agencies have been unable to access the message because of the use of encryption) said: “[E]nd-to-end encryption has a place, cyber security is really important and getting it wrong costs the economy and costs people money.”¹³³ This statement is, in itself, an example of the complexity of the issue of successfully balancing the needs of security with the principles of civil liberties. Ms Rudd herself complained that WhatsApp gives terrorists a “*place to hide*”,¹³⁴ yet she acknowledges the delicate balance between privacy and cyber-security. The reality of the matter is that tough constraints require a sensible and informed approach.

Mr Ali’s comment was intended to stress the need to logically consider the right to privacy, and to avoid the temptation of implementing policies that would destroy the way our liberal democracies work. Although it is in the human nature to attempt to find quick solutions to complex problems, Mr Ali was attempting to draw attention to the rationale of quick solutions and their wider repercussions.

Indeed, there have been number of warnings against the rushed implementation of legislation from people highly experienced in the security field. Many experts have even argued that implementing draconian laws that limit our civil liberties would directly play into the hands of terrorists who want to destroy our society as we know it. For example, Sam Dumitu, from the think tank the Adam Smith Institute said: “*It is mathematically impossible to build a back door for just the good guys. It means building a back door to your private messages for Putin's favourite hacker, Guccifer. It means opening up your private photos to perverts like the iCloud hacker. End-to-end encryption keeps us safe.*”¹³⁵

In short, Mr Ali was simply expressing his own, personal view surrounding the complex issue of encryption and privacy, like many others – from security experts to tech giants – have done

¹³² End-to-end encryption is a system of communication where only the communicating users can read the messages. The systems are designed to defeat any attempts at surveillance or tampering because no third parties can decipher the data being communicated or stored.

¹³³ “Backdoor access to WhatsApp? Rudd's call suggests a hazy grasp of encryption”, *The Guardian*, March 27, 2017, accessed 16.11.2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/mar/27/amber-rudd-call-backdoor-access-hazy-grasp-encryption>

¹³⁴ “‘WHAT SIDE ARE YOU ON WHATSAPP?’ Amber Rudd blasts Whatsapp for ‘letting terrorists hide their plotting’ after tech giant refuses MI5 pleas to decode encrypted messages used by Khalid Masood”, *The Sun*, March 26, 2017, accessed 23.01.2018, <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/3181903/amber-rudd-said-whatsapp-must-not-be-place-for-terrorists-to-hide-and-calls-for-encrypted-messaging-services-to-be-open-to-the-intelligence-agencies/>

¹³⁵ “Tech firms prepare for showdown with Government over terrorists' use of WhatsApp”, *The Independent*, March 28, 2017, accessed 16.11.2017, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/whatsapp-khalid-masood-london-attack-tech-firm-government-showdown-a7654696.html>

before him. For example, Brad Smith, chief executive of Microsoft, said: “We will not help any government, including our own, hack or attack any customer anywhere. We will turn over data when we are legally compelled to do so.”¹³⁶

It is, once again, noteworthy that this is perhaps an example where the opinions expressed are not so objectionable as it is the person saying them – i.e. for a non-Muslim to express such views, it is part of legitimate and cogent debate, however, if the orator is a Muslim, their opinions are suddenly suspect. Security and civil liberties are both issues which affect every citizen of this country. Therefore, it is only right that all citizens are equally entitled to comment on the surrounding debates.

Allegation: Shakeel Begg

*With him on the stage was Shakeel Begg, who was found by a judge to be an extremist for saying that violence in support of Islam would constitute a man’s greatest deed. Mr Ali condemned that judgment as “bad & politically loaded” and used the hashtag #istandbymyimam.*¹³⁷

Author: Dominic Kennedy

Time and date: 12:01, April 10, 2017

Publication: The Times

Mr Ali’s comments reflected his personal view that the judgment of the libel court was flawed in its approach to the analysis of what can be complex issues. However, this viewpoint is entirely the personal viewpoint of Mr Ali as it was expressed on his own private Twitter account and does not reflect the views of MEND.

Allegation: Shaikh, JIMAS and Abu Muntasir

Mubin Shaikh

Mubin Shaikh is a Canadian Muslim who turned away from extremism after 9/11. He went on to work for the Canadian police and intelligence services. In an extraordinary act of bravery, he infiltrated a terrorist cell known as the “Toronto 18”. His evidence was crucial to the identification, arrests, and successful prosecutions of cell members.

For Azad Ali, MEND’s “National Community Head”, this work was reprehensible. In 2016, Ali warned his Facebook followers to “be wary” of Shaikh, adding “don’t even give him the time of day”. This was Ali’s introduction to a post by a fellow extremist which denigrated Shaikh as a “snake” and “spineless vermin”. Jimas and Abu Muntasir were also attacked in the post.

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Author: David Toubé (AKA habibi)

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Dominic Kennedy, “Extremist leads Muslim lobby group” ..., <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/extremist-leads-muslim-lobby-group-7q2hg30zc>

¹³⁸ “MEND and Parliament...”, <http://hurryupharry.org/2017/10/24/mend-and-parliament-this-is-no-way-to-help-muslims/>

Time and Date: 22:10, October 24, 2017

Publication: Harry's Place

Shaikh, JIMAS and Abu Muntasir will be dealt with independently below.

Shaikh

Mr Ali's comment was made in reference to Mubin Shaikh, a man who was paid \$300,000 to infiltrate the "Toronto 18" terror group. Mr Ali's comments were not, of course, in relation to the Canadian government's attempt to take down a potential terrorist cell in the country. His comments related exclusively to the questionable informant that was chosen to carry out this task.

Mr Shaikh is a former army cadet with martial arts training, who holds extreme views against Muslims. Some facts about Mr Shaikh can help clarify Mr Ali's comment:

- He started using cocaine shortly before police began making arrests in the alleged terror plot. He admitted he became addicted after a few months, *"needing another fix as frequently as every 20 minutes"*.¹³⁹
- He was also once convicted of threatening to chop the legs off two 12-year-old girls.¹⁴⁰
- During a heated Facebook discussion which has now been deleted, Shaikh said he was *"ready to go to war"* with numerous British Muslim activists, including against CAGE, for disclosing that he was exposed as a government spy against the Muslim community in Canada.¹⁴¹
- Shaikh quickly labelled a number of British citizens as *"terrorist sympathisers"* for criticising his views on radicalisation, and threatened to report them to the Metropolitan Police.¹⁴²
- In addition to making violent threats and labelling people as terrorist sympathisers, Shaikh went on to post numerous images of himself holding automatic assault rifles and other firearms, stating on two occasions: *"does this look like Call of Duty?"* in reference to a video game in which players undertake armed military missions – after he was asked how he intends to *"go to war."*¹⁴³
- Some of Shaikh's testimony was labelled by Crown Prosecutor John Neander as *"invention"* which contradicted testimony that he made under oath in previous court proceedings.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁹ "Mole in Toronto terror trial tells court he was addicted to cocaine", *The Globe and Mail*, April 22, 2010, accessed 16.11.2017, <https://beta.theglobeandmail.com/news/toronto/mole-in-toronto-terror-trial-tells-court-he-was-addicted-to-cocaine/article4262947/?ref=https://www.theglobeandmail.com&service=mobile>

¹⁴⁰ "Witness warns he's 'nobody's shill'", *The Globe and Mail*, July 4, 2008, accessed 16.11.2017, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/witness-warns-hes-nobodys-shill/article4220958/>

¹⁴¹ "Gun-wielding former spy pledges to "go to war" with British Muslim activists", *5 Pillars*, December 7, 2016, accessed 16.11.2017, <http://5pillarsuk.com/2016/12/07/gun-wielding-former-spy-pledges-to-go-to-war-with-british-muslim-activists/>

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ "Crown turns on own witness", *the Canadian Star*, June 19, 2008, accessed 16.11.2017, https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2008/06/19/crown_turns_on_own_witness.html

In light of this information, Mr Ali's comment appears as a legitimate warning against a potentially very dangerous individual. We fail to see how Mr Ali's position on the issue of Shaikh can be misinterpreted, or can suggest that Mr Ali opposes those who fight terrorism.

If anything, serious questions should be asked as to why Mr Shaikh, an extremist with a long history of violence and drug abuse, has been given a free reign to roam the UK, lecture at universities, and allegedly work alongside authorities to carry out counter-terrorism work. It is clear that Mr Shaikh is not a man to be trusted.

JIMAS and Abu Muntasir

Within the discussions surrounding the Shakeel Begg case (as mentioned previously), the head of JIMAS, Abu Muntasir, thanked the judge for his ruling on the matter – a ruling which it has been established Mr Ali disagreed with. It is worthy of note that JIMAS was once a conservative Salafi organisation that took an unprecedented shift in outlook following 2005. This resulted in a stance similar to that held by the Quilliam Foundation. As discussed at great length above, these are not positions that all – or even most – British Muslims share. As a result, Mr Ali was expressing personal disagreement with Abu Muntasir's stance. Again, this does not reflect MEND's official position on the Begg Judgement.

Allegation: #OnePunch

Mr Ali in January tweeted pictures of public figures including Theresa May, who has diabetes, and the MailOnline columnist Katie Hopkins, who has epilepsy, with the caption "Who would you choose? #OnePunch".



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.¹⁴⁵

Author: Dominic Kennedy

Time and Date: 12:01am, April 10, 2017

Publication: The Times

This is an accusation made by Dominic Kennedy, and in describing a discussion that is most certainly in satire, his implication that Dr Iqbal or Mr Ali condone violence is extraordinary. Considering the satirical nature of the tweet, it is remarkable that a senior journalist at a newspaper such as The Times could seriously suggest that Dr Iqbal's response to Mr Ali's tweet is evidence that they advocate violence against women – and specifically violence against women with health problems.

It is also interesting to note that in his correspondence with MEND before he published this absurd allegation, Mr Kennedy was under the impression that Dr Iqbal is a man – hence his possible desire within the correspondence to insinuate that Dr Iqbal advocates violence against women. She is in fact a woman. This also perhaps exposes Mr Kennedy's own ingrained sexism in his assumption that a doctor must be a man.

The original tweet has been in wide circulation on the internet long before it was tweeted by Mr Ali. Dr Iqbal maintains that the tweet was, quite obviously, entirely jocular; she would no more condone violence against Katie Hopkins than she would against Donald Trump, or any other individual in the graphic or for that matter anyone else. The fact that Mr Kennedy quoted the General Medical Council's guide within his correspondence with Dr Iqbal on the issue exposes the length that Mr Kennedy was stretching to in order to write a negative article.

As for Mr Ali, he certainly does not advocate violence, and the suggestion that a jocular tweet of this kind is indicative of support for violence is obviously ludicrous.

Allegation: Support of Hamas

Azad Ali "has also expressed support for... the terrorist group Hamas. So he is perfect for MEND."¹⁴⁶

Author: David Toubé (AKA habibi)

Time and Date: 22:10, October 24, 2017

Publication: Harry's Place

"Sahar al-Faifi of MEND supporting Hamas"¹⁴⁷

Author: David Toubé (AKA habibi)

Time and Date: 19:21, September 25, 2017

Publication: Harry's Place

¹⁴⁵ Dominic Kennedy, "A body that courts controversy", *The Times*, April 10, 2017, accessed 16.11.2017, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/a-body-that-courts-controversy-ctpzwk65c>

¹⁴⁶ "MEND and Parliament...", <http://hurryupharry.org/2017/10/24/mend-and-parliament-this-is-no-way-to-help-muslims/>

¹⁴⁷ "Sahar al-Faifi of MEND supporting Hamas", *Harry's Place*, September 25, 2017, accessed 15.12.2017, <http://hurryupharry.org/2017/09/26/mend-muslim-women-and-the-labour-party/sahar-al-faifi-of-mend-supporting-hamas/>

Both Mr Azad Ali and Sahar al-Faifi have been accused of supporting Hamas. It is worth bearing in mind that the political wing of Hamas (Dawah) has not been proscribed by the Government as a terrorist organisation, which only considers its military wing, Hamas Izz al-Din al-Qassem Brigades, as a terrorist group.

Indeed, our ministers and officials have met with Hamas previously¹⁴⁸ and a previous Select Committee on Foreign Affairs has actually advised Her Majesty's Government to engage 'moderate elements' within Hamas in peace talks in order to assure a lasting, durable peace in the resolving the Middle East conflict. The President of the International Crisis Group, Louise Arbour, made a similar argument five years ago after the Mavi Marmara incident. The EU was forced to remove Hamas from its list of 'terrorist organisations' last year after the EU's general court ruled that its designation was "*based not on acts examined and confirmed in decisions of competent authorities but on factual imputations derived from the press and the internet*".

¹⁴⁸ See "MPs meet Hamas leader in Damascus", *Reuters*, March 14, 2009, accessed 23.01.2018, <https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-palestinians-hamas-britain/mps-meet-hamas-leader-in-damascus-idUKTRE52D21Y20090314>. See also "UK criticised for Hamas meeting", *BBC News*, June 7, 2005, accessed 23.01.2018, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/4617687.stm

Allegations against Mr Sufyan Ismail

Allegation: Playing “Kingmaker”

*In new recordings heard by this newspaper, Sufyan Ismail, Mend's chief executive, describes the group's strategy to act as “kingmaker” in next month's election and claims it can control as many as 30 seats. “The Muslim vote is worth ten ordinary votes because... we are heavily concentrated in a few areas,” he said. “Anybody who can give any one party 10, 20, 30 seats, like we can, they have to listen to you.”*¹⁴⁹

Author: Andrew Gilligan

Time and Date: 14:11, April 4, 2015

Publication: The Telegraph

In this instance, Gilligan is selectively quoting for his own journalistic purposes. In actual fact, the audio recording shows Mr Ismail stated the following:

“At a time when parliament is hung and no party has a large majority, anybody who can give any party 10, 20, 30 seats, like we (the Muslim community) can because we are heavily concentrated in a few areas, you (the Muslim community) are what they call the kingmaker, they have to listen to you.”

The comment relays an inevitable fact of coalition-building in the event of no overall majority emerging, when small parties play pivotal roles. It also affirms the noted significance of the Muslim vote in the 2015 election.

Gilligan falsely maintains that MEND's "strategy [is] to act as “kingmaker” in next month's election" and adds that "[MEND] *claims it can control as many as 30 seats.*" Far from claiming that MEND itself has influence over the democratic process, Mr Ismail was encouraging British Muslims to participate in the democratic process because Muslim communities have a great potential to influence the balance of power in elections.

British Muslims are instrumental as voters in a number of parliamentary seats as evidenced from data taken from the 2011 Census. Indeed, 77 Parliamentary constituencies have Muslim populations of 10% or higher, and 24 Parliamentary constituencies of 20% or higher.

The assertion that we purport to play the role of “kingmaker” or that we claim to “*control as many as 30 seats*” is thus a misrepresentation of our grassroots strategy to engage Muslim voters in the democratic process.

Furthermore, MEND is politically neutral, and as such it would be impossible to play “kingmaker” as we have no policy of endorsing one party over another. While we do provide breakdowns of different party policies in the run-up to elections in order to help the public better understand party manifestos, our only objective is to encourage and facilitate the increased voting of Muslims and minority communities– we do not dictate or even advise which party or candidate to vote for.

¹⁴⁹ Andrew Gilligan, “Muslim group with links to extremists boasts of influencing election”, *The Telegraph*, April 4, 2015, accessed 14.11.2017, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/general-election-2015/11515630/Muslim-group-with-links-to-extremists-boasts-of-influencing-election.html>

Allegation: British Jews fighting for the IDF and British Muslims fighting in Syria

*“David Cameron recently said that British Jews fighting for the IDF [Israeli army] will not be prosecuted,” Mr Ismail said. “But British Muslims going to Syria fighting **against** Assad... will definitely face interrogation. Now do you think that if we landed those 20 seats or 30 seats, he [Cameron] would have the audacity to say that to the Muslim community? Not a chance!”¹⁵⁰*

Author: Andrew Gilligan

Time and Date: 14:11, April 4, 2015

Publication: The Telegraph

The exact accusation in this allegation is unclear. However, it is important to note the background context within this debate, which is the deep frustration felt by British Muslims on the disparity in treatment between British Jews going to Israel to fight for the IDF, versus Muslims going abroad to engage in conflict – especially those fighting **against** ISIS, such as the Free Syrian Army. There is also the broader disparity in the case of white Britons, some of them former soldiers, who have spoken of their plans to go abroad and fight ISIS.

In a talk at Zakariyya mosque in Bolton to an assembly of local Muslims in 2015, Mr Ismail said:

"If the Muslim community can show it can deliver 20, 30, 40 seats, they have to take us a lot more seriously than they have been taking us. David Cameron recently said in Haaretz newspaper that, British Jews coming back from Israel... who have been fighting for the Israeli Defence Force will not be prosecuted... but British Muslims going to Syria, fighting against Assad, whatever the rights and wrongs are,... will definitely face interrogation."

"Now do you think, if we landed those 20 seats or 30 seats, he would have the audacity to say that to the Muslim community? Not a chance".

The issue of British Muslims engaging in conflicts abroad, and the parallel drawn with British Jews who serve in the IDF, is a subject that has been raised on a number of occasions following the 2014 conflict in Gaza, most notably by Robert Fisk of the Independent.¹⁵¹ It is also an area addressed by Labour MPs Yasmin Qureshi and Grahame Morris, both of whom raised the issue of differential treatment in the way in which the Government approaches British Muslims who have gone abroad to take part in conflicts abroad and the regular service of British Jews in the IDF.

Baroness Sayeeda Warsi has further criticised the current UK policy which allows for British Jews to join the Israel Defence Force (IDF) through the ‘Mahal’ program, as she contended that *“if you don’t fight for Britain, you do not fight”*. She further called for prosecution for anyone who goes to fight in a foreign country.¹⁵²

¹⁵⁰ Andrew Gilligan, “Muslim group with links to extremists...”, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/general-election-2015/11515630/Muslim-group-with-links-to-extremists-boasts-of-influencing-election.html>

¹⁵¹ Robert Fisk, “It’s not just radicalised Islamists – what about foreign fighters who flock to the IDF?”, *The Independent*, July 28, 2014, accessed 14.11.2017, <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/comment/its-not-just-radicalised-islamists-what-about-foreign-fighters-who-flock-to-the-idf-9634260.html>

¹⁵² “UK citizens who fight in Israeli army should be prosecuted, Baroness Warsi says”, *The Independent*, March 31, 2017, accessed 14.11.2017, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/uk-citizens-fight-israeli-army-idf-mahal-prosecuted-baroness-sayeeda-warsi-foreign-fighters-british-a7659766.html>

In September 2014, Grahame Morris MP asked the Prime Minister in the House of Commons, following the announcement of passport seizure plans: *"The Prime Minister has set out his arguments for the withdrawal of UK passports. Given the strong evidence of Israeli war crimes in Gaza – we have heard about 500 children being killed under a terrible bombardment – will British citizens fighting in the Israel defence forces be treated in the same way as those returning from Syria and Iraq?"*¹⁵³

The significance of voting as a means of contesting the manner in which legislation is proposed, particularly that which has a disproportionate impact on British Muslims – which much counter-terrorism legislation does – is exactly the proper way of articulating Muslim concerns at the perceived double standards applied within legislation. By engaging in the political process, British Muslims are better placed to challenge these double standards. Moreover, MEND have *repeatedly denounced ISIS and its terrorist activities at our events* which have served as vital platforms for us and other Muslim leaders to unequivocally condemn the group that goes by the name 'Islamic' State.

Allegation: Politicians failing to condemn 2013 arson attack in Muswell Hill

*"Mr Ismail claimed that a 2013 arson attack which destroyed a Muslim community centre in Muswell Hill had been condoned by the rest of society, saying: "Did you hear one politician condemn it? Even one politician?"*¹⁵⁴

Author: Andrew Gilligan

Time and Date: 14:11 04 Apr 2015

Publication: The Telegraph

During this discussion, Mr Ismail was speaking in hyperbole in order to demonstrate a wider point: that such attacks were not as widely condemned as they perhaps should have been.

Attacks against Muslims are frequently denied adequate prominence in both media output and within public debate. Meanwhile, violence perpetrated by Muslims are given heightened prominence. With media and political focus directed almost exclusively at stories presenting Muslims as criminals, violent extremists and sexual predators, and without adequate balance when Muslims are the victims; public opinion is distorted and Muslims are left feeling unsupported.

The arson attack in Muswell Hill was one such occasion. At a time when Muslims were engulfed in a spate of anti-Muslim attacks following the murder of Drummer Lee Rigby, there was indeed widespread criticism of the muted response from senior politicians, specifically following the attacks in Tipton and Walsall.¹⁵⁵ This frustration directed towards the delayed and muted responses of politicians in condemning such attacks was in no way limited to MEND. The Muslim Council of Britain also wrote to the then Communities Secretary to protest at the lack of Government action on tackling the attacks on the Muslim community.

¹⁵³ "Parliamentary Debate", in Publication and Records, *Parliament UK*, September 1, 2014, accessed 14.11.2017, <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmhansrd/cm140901/debtext/140901-0002.htm>

¹⁵⁴ Andrew Gilligan, "Muslim group with links to extremists...", <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/general-election-2015/11515630/Muslim-group-with-links-to-extremists-boasts-of-influencing-election.html>

¹⁵⁵ "David Cameron should have spoken out on mosque attacks, says Labour MP", *Express & Star*, July 27, 2013, accessed 05.01.2018, <https://www.expressandstar.com/news/2013/07/27/david-cameron-should-have-spoken-out-on-mosque-attacks-says-labour-mp/>

Meanwhile, David Cameron and the Home Secretary were both criticised for not speaking out on the bomb attacks in the West Midlands, which narrowly averted major fatalities only because the bomb – which was timed to go off when the Mosque was busiest during Friday prayers – missed its intended target when the hour of prayer was brought forward. As the editor of the Muslim News, Ahmed Versi articulated during a press hearing in Downing Street: *"There is concern in the Muslim community that the PM is not concerned about the welfare of the Muslims at such a time."*¹⁵⁶

The Deputy Chief Constable of West Midlands Police, Dave Thompson, who were dealing with bomb attacks, a murder inquiry and an English Defence League demonstration all occurring in the same period, similarly expressed disquiet about the lack of concern for the welfare of British Muslim citizens. In a blog, Dave Thompson wrote: *"I wonder if you picked another faith and said that there would be a series of bombings at places of worship during a major religious period and the police had a picture of the alleged attacker you might think it would get more coverage?"*¹⁵⁷

The same sentiments were echoed by Labour MP and Shadow Home Office minister, Chris Bryant, who in a visit to the West Midlands in July 2013 said, *"It's a shame we have not seen the Prime Minister say anything about it. He could have been more forceful about attacks on the Muslim community"*.¹⁵⁸

Accusation: Lack of transparency in respect to a donation to Yasmin Qureshi MP in 2017

*"Yasmin Qureshi, the shadow justice minister, accepted £5,000 from Sufyan Ismail, the founder of Mend, without identifying him as her donor."*¹⁵⁹

Author: Dominic Kennedy

Time and Date: 12:01, April 10, 2017

Publication: The Times

In terms of Yasmin Qureshi MP not naming Mr Ismail as a donor, this was purely a clerical error whereby Mr Ismail's company at the time was named in the disclosure rather than himself personally.

¹⁵⁶ "Cameron declined to condemn terrorist bombs targeting three mosques", *The Muslim News*, July 22, 2013, accessed 14.11.2017, <http://muslimnews.co.uk/pressreleases/press-releases/cameron-declined-to-condemn-terrorist-bombs-targeting-three-mosques/>

¹⁵⁷ "Top cop attacks media coverage of mosque bombings and Birmingham Mail's report of crime rise", *Birmingham Mail*, July 25, 2013, accessed 14.11.2017, <http://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/local-news/west-midlands-polices-dave-thompson-5319513>

¹⁵⁸ "David Cameron should have spoken out on mosque attacks, says Labour MP", *Express & Star*, July 27, 2013, accessed 14.11.2017, <https://www.expressandstar.com/news/2013/07/27/david-cameron-should-have-spoken-out-on-mosque-attacks-says-labour-mp/>

¹⁵⁹ Dominic Kennedy, "Extremist leads Muslim lobby group" ..., <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/extremist-leads-muslim-lobby-group-7q2hg30zc>

Allegation: MEND's stance on Israel

*"Mr Ismail... told the Bolton meeting how the group had organised to "batter the Israeli lobby" in the Commons."*¹⁶⁰

Author: Andrew Gilligan

Time and Date: 14:11, April 4, 2015

Publication: The Telegraph

Both Mr Ismail and MEND recognise that the use of the word 'batter' was perhaps not the best choice of words and could have been expressed in more appropriate terms. Thus, with the benefit of hindsight, a better word would have been 'defeat'.

However, Mr Ismail's comments regarding the Israeli lobby were made in connection to the successful vote in Parliament to recognise Palestinian statehood, which many in the pro-Israel lobby had objected to and lobbied very heavily against.¹⁶¹ To the contrary, MEND and large sections of British Muslims had supported Palestinian statehood.

Certain commentators and organisations work tirelessly to force discussions surrounding Palestine and Israel's actions towards Palestinians outside the realm of legitimate political debate. It is unfortunate that this is once again happening in this case. MEND, along with countless academics, politicians, human rights campaigners, faith groups (including Jewish faith groups), and activists, is unequivocal in its desire to see a peaceful solution to Israeli occupation of Palestine. Indeed, recognition for an independent state of Palestine has been highlighted in both the Labour and Liberal Democrat 2017 election manifestos.

As occurs so frequently, presenting support for an independent state of Palestine as something sinister and 'extremist' equates to a slur against all those who support the Palestinian cause and serves as an attempt to shut down legitimate political debate.

Some right-wing journalists have sought to use Mr Ismail's reference to 300 years of the Zionist lobby as pointing towards links with anti-Semitism, claiming that as Israel itself didn't exist until 1948 and Mr Ismail was actually referring to Jews. This accusation clearly overlooks the fact that a Jewish state has been an objective for Zionists from biblical times and beyond, let alone the last 300 years.

Accusation: Anti-Semitism and Homophobia

"MEND have also resorted to one of their favourite low tactics when attacking Quilliam – link it with Israel. In a talk for MEND at a mosque in Bolton in 2014, MEND's founder, sole shareholder, and former CEO Sufyan Ismail said this in an appeal to the audience for donations to MEND:

"We're not Quilliam Foundation, yeah, where we get government money and pro-Israeli lobby funding and things like this. We don't want the Government to fob us off with some phony thing called Tell MAMA, which has got a pro-Zionist pretty much heading it or in a very senior capacity and is making all sorts of comments we might not agree with when it comes to homosexuality, to be recording

¹⁶⁰ Andrew Gilligan, "Muslim group with links to extremists...", <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/general-election-2015/11515630/Muslim-group-with-links-to-extremists-boasts-of-influencing-election.html>

¹⁶¹ Mr Ismail has unequivocally clarified his comments on the above issue. See "Setting the record straight: comments at Cheadle mosque, 2014", *Sufyan Ismail*, January 4, 2016, accessed 23.01.2018, <http://www.sufyanismail.com/blog/setting-the-record-straight-comments-at-chedale-mosque-2014/>.

*Islamophobia. You might wonder who we are, who funds us at the end of the day. Are we some kind of Prevent-funded body or government-funded organisation? Well there's good news and bad news here. The good news is we are 100% community funded, alhamdulillah (all praise be to God). So, I think you should all go "alhamdulillah" to that, yeah? I promise you not one penny comes from any government of any description, yeah. 100% of our funding comes from the Muslim community... Put one drop of urine in a bucket of water, who's going to drink it? Who's going to drink it or bathe in it? Simple as that. This thing has got to be kept pure. It's got to be kept pure."*¹⁶²

Author: David Toube (AKA habibi)

Time and Date: 19:21, September 25, 2017

Publication: Harry's Place

This accusation has culminated in Nick Cohen suggesting that, in an attempt to deride the reputation of Tell MAMA, MEND has decided that *"the best means...of turning it [Tell MAMA] into a satanic organisation, is to say that it associates with gays and Jews."*¹⁶³

Mr Ismail has unequivocally stated: *"I condemn all forms of anti-Semitism and Homophobia and I challenge anyone to provide any comments by myself to the contrary"*.

The wider point made in Mr Ismail's speeches in Bolton and Cheadle relate to the points made earlier, and concerns the lack of trust that many British Muslims feel towards organisations that receive government funding - or have received government funding in the past - as they are not free from political agendas and thus cannot truly represent Muslim communities as they are forced to work within government narratives. To honestly represent any community, organisations must be able to criticise and debate freely for the benefit of those they claim to represent.

Consequently, and evidenced by their attitudes towards the Israeli occupation of Palestine amongst other statements, Quilliam and Tell MAMA are clearly two such organisations that cannot claim to represent the sentiments and interests of Muslim communities.

Mr Ismail's words have since been used to suggest that MEND has *"a troubling attitude to antisemitism."* The accusation has been levelled by the Community Security Trust (CST) and first emerged during a campaign (which according to former Blackburn MP Jack Straw, was led by the Jewish Chronicle) to oust MEND's predecessor, iENGAGE, from its role as secretariat to the All Party Parliamentary Group on Islamophobia. The remark was attributed to the CST's Mark Gardner, in an article published in the Jewish Chronicle, and though he suggested we had *"a troubling attitude to antisemitism"* there was no evidence offered to substantiate the accusation. **Critically, neither the CST nor Jewish Chronicle were able to accuse MEND or Mr Ismail of anti-Semitism explicitly, which perhaps indicates the weakness of the accusation itself.**

Regarding the discussion of Zionism, as the audio clearly shows, Mr Ismail was attempting to highlight the inappropriateness of the appointment of a prominent UK Zionist to head up the Islamophobia reporting unit (Tell MAMA). When considering the huge concerns that British Muslims have regarding the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land, this is not an unreasonable assertion by Mr Ismail.

¹⁶² "MEND and Parliament...", <http://hurryupharry.org/2017/10/24/mend-and-parliament-this-is-no-way-to-help-muslims/>

¹⁶³ Nick Cohen, "How brave Muslims are being silenced", *The Guardian*, October 4, 2015, accessed 16.11.2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/oct/04/how-brave-muslims-are-being-silenced>

This is an issue of appropriate representation and not remotely an indication of anti-Semitism. The corollary of this would be appointing a life-long Palestinian human rights supporter like George Galloway as head of a UK anti-Semitism recording service (like the CST), an action that many British Jews may have concerns with.

Concerning his remarks about homosexuality, Mr Ismail, again as the audio highlights, was commenting on views expressed by the founder of Tell MAMA, Fiyaz Mughal, surrounding the theological position of Islam and homosexuality. Mr Ismail was not expressing any views about homosexuals in general.

Mr Mughal has inferred that age-old Islamic religious texts do not object the concept of homosexuality. To be clear, **we are not talking about the rights of homosexual individuals to equality and respect, but rather the technical Qur'anic view on homosexuality** which is similarly found in the Bible and the Torah.

Fiyaz Mughal, perhaps for strategic purposes, was clearly misrepresenting the religious texts. Islam, in line with Christianity and Judaism, shares the view that homosexuality is sinful. Mr Ismail was attempting to highlight that it is not the place of Mr Mughal to re-write biblical or Qur'anic text in this regard out of political opportunism or the need for funding.

However, it must be emphasised that, while an *action* in monotheistic faiths may be considered sinful, that does not imply that the *person* should also be condemned. Followers of Christianity, Judaism and Islam generally face no contradiction between privately holding their religious views on homosexuality, and fighting discrimination against homosexual communities and fully respecting their equal rights and value.

In other words, beyond scriptural prescriptions, and especially in a modern democracy like Britain, (and as Mr Ismail has publicly stated) no individual – regardless of religion, ethnicity, gender or sexuality – should ever face discrimination at any level. As previously mentioned, within our recent 2017 Manifesto, MEND explicitly called for better legal protections against homophobic hate crime.¹⁶⁴ MEND unequivocally attests that hatred on the basis of religious, sexual, ethnic or gendered identity is categorically unacceptable and should be resisted wherever it is found.

To deny people of faith the right to follow their scripture is in itself a contravention of their right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, as dictated by Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

Regarding Mr Ismail's personal circumstances, it would be very difficult to defend any accusation claiming him to be either anti-Semitic or homophobic. As Mr Ismail has previously pointed out, his PA and Chauffeur of many years are Jewish and homosexual respectively. It is unlikely that someone holding anti-Semitic or homophobic views would have employed such people for such a long period of time. Clearly, the accusation that Mr Ismail is homophobic is unfounded.

The crux of the allegation about MEND having “*a troubling attitude to antisemitism*” actually rests on a different point of contention: Mr Ismail's stance on anti-Zionism and Palestinian human rights.

¹⁶⁴ “MEND Muslim Manifesto 2017”..., https://mend.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/MEND-Muslim-Manifesto-2017_FINAL_lowres-1.pdf

As previously mentioned, what is concerning about attempts to equate anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism, is the implication that discussions surrounding Palestine and Israel's actions towards Palestinians are somehow outside the realm of legitimate debate. MEND, along with countless academics, politicians, Human Rights campaigners, faith groups (including Jewish faith groups), and activists, is unequivocal in its desire to see a peaceful solution to Israeli occupation of Palestine. Indeed, recognition for an independent state of Palestine has been highlighted in both the Labour and Liberal Democrat 2017 election manifestos.

Accusation: Holocaust Memorial Day Boycott

*MEND had been accused of organising boycotts of Holocaust Memorial Day by the Muslim Council of Britain.*¹⁶⁵

Author: Ian Drury and Larisa Brown

Time and Date: 23:59, November 2, 2017 UPDATE 15:45, November 6, 2017

Publication: Daily Mail

The accusation levied by the Daily Mail that MEND organised to boycott Holocaust Memorial Day is entirely untrue and the Mail has subsequently apologised for it.¹⁶⁶ Indeed, several speakers from MEND are already scheduled to speak at events supporting the Holocaust Memorial Day this year.

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- *An earlier version of this article said that MEND had been accused of organising boycotts of Holocaust Memorial Day by the Muslim Council of Britain. In fact, no such accusation has been made: it was the MCB that did not take up its invitation to the event from 2001 to 2007 (though they have attended since). We apologise for the error are happy to set the record straight.*

MEND categorically rejects all accusations of homophobia and anti-Semitism. The issues surrounding anti-Semitism were mentioned 11 times in our 2017 Manifesto, where we also called for better legal protections against homophobic hate crime as well.¹⁶⁷ We applaud solidarity amongst all social and religious groups in a conjoined effort to tackle all forms of hatred. Indeed, MEND itself is proud to co-operate with both of these groups (homosexual and Jewish), and others, in joint efforts to tackle hate crime and hate speech. We have worked

¹⁶⁵ "Cosying up to extremists: Corbyn is speaker at hardline Islamic meeting - just 24 hours before he snubs invitation to honour the birth of Israel", *The Daily Mail*, November 2, 2017, accessed 16.11.2017, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-5044983/How-Corbyn-speaker-hardline-Islamic-meeting.html#ixzz4yapDYu4G>

¹⁶⁶ The text of the apology reads: "An earlier version of this article said that MEND had been accused of organising boycotts of Holocaust Memorial Day by the Muslim Council of Britain. In fact, no such accusation has been made: it was the MCB that did not take up its invitation to the event from 2001 to 2007 (though they have attended since). We apologise for the error are happy to set the record straight." "Cosying up to extremists...", <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-5044983/How-Corbyn-speaker-hardline-Islamic-meeting.html#ixzz4yapDYu4G>

¹⁶⁷ "MEND Muslim Manifesto 2017" ..., https://mend.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/MEND-Muslim-Manifesto-2017_FINAL_lowres-1.pdf

with many Jewish and homosexual MPs over the years and continue to do so. Accusations of homophobia or anti-Semitism are therefore baseless.

Allegations against MEND's volunteers

It should be remembered in addressing accusations against volunteers that all of these accusations stem from personal social media accounts, upon which the views expressed are not the views of MEND as an organisation. It is clear that the primary cause for conflict is over the topic of the Israeli government's continued occupation and human rights abuses in Palestine. This is a topic that a great number of British Muslims and non-Muslims feel very strongly about and there are countless occasions where legitimate debates surrounding this issue have become derailed through the use of terminologies. This confusion largely stems from the frequent deliberate conflation of criticism of Israel and anti-Semitism by our detractors.

While MEND as an organisation opposes human rights abuses in Palestine inflicted by the Israeli government, we categorically oppose anti-Semitism and actively work to tackle this very real problem affecting British Jews. Indeed, as previously mentioned, the issues surrounding anti-Semitism were mentioned 11 times in our 2017 Manifesto¹⁶⁸ and there have been numerous occasions when our working groups have shown solidarity and support to Jewish and other communities in times of crisis.¹⁶⁹ Solidarity in fighting anti-Semitism is a commitment we expect from all our volunteers – as is in line with our manifesto and pledges.

With close to 1,000 volunteers across the country, MEND cannot police the social media activities of every single volunteer. However, going forward, we are committed to ensuring that volunteers have an awareness of the implications of their comments made on social networking platforms – regardless as to whether these pages and profiles are private or public. To that end, we are currently devising a training course to educate on terminologies, and methods to effectively convey the intended messages within the boundaries of legitimate debate.

It is worth noting that Ms Heena Khaled, Ms Siema Iqbal and Mr Vaseem Ahmed were not staff members of MEND. Rather, they were local volunteers who are no longer involved with MEND.

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 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?"¹⁷⁰

Author: Dominic Kennedy

Time and Date: 12:01, April 10, 2017

Publication: The Times

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ "Muslims offer 'wonderful' gesture...", <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/muslims-leeds-synagogue-swastika-graffiti-facebook-jewish-support-hate-crime-police-a8000441.html>

¹⁷⁰ Dominic Kennedy, "A body that courts controversy" ..., <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/a-body-that-courts-controversy-ctpzwk65c>

Heena Khaled's response to Kennedy is as follows:

"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, 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.

The comment 'To blood suck more Palestinians', was written as a visual expression of how much blood has been lost in the conflict. Again, it does not mention 'who' did this, and for me it relates to not just warfare but also the prevention of freedom of movement which has led to many Palestinians not being able to reach hospitals on time in Jerusalem or from Gaza when crossing the checkpoint. When Palestinian villages are prevented from regular water and medical supplies and are cornered within the growth of illegal settlements as per noted by the ICJ/ICC (That this is a breach of international law), then my comment was more of a poetic expression and not literal in its full sense. Visibly blood has been shed as we have seen on the news and to manipulate my comments into blood libel is detracting from the various meanings this comment presents in terms of the plight of Palestinian people and the mass human rights violations as noted by international law institutions.

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."

Siema Iqbal

On 29 January 2017, shortly after international Holocaust Memorial Day – a point she references with a hashtag – Ms Iqbal reposted a tweet by the Israeli Prime Minister and wrote, "#Trump behaves like #HitlerinTheMaking and @netanyahu supports him? IRONY IS UNREAL. Remember #Holocaust? #MuslimBan #HMD2017 #maytrump.

In August 2014, she tweeted the same image which would later bring the Bradford MP Naz Shah into disrepute, showing an outline of Israel superimposed onto a map of the United States and advocating the transference of Israel. In the post Iqbal, wrote "the solution to #Gaza crisis".

That same month, Iqbal retweeted a tweet that read, "Truce in Gaza? Don't you believe it! The Jews are shopping around for cheaper bombs." Another tweet she is reported to have retweeted depicted a blood-stained Star of David with the words, "When a people who survived a genocide use it as an excuse to commit genocide".

In the words of Siema Iqbal herself:

"I have been made aware of a vicious campaign of misrepresentation and harassment against myself by an organisation known as North West Friends Of Israel (NWFOI). The campaign is undermining

essential work being done in our communities to counter bigotry and hatred, and appears to be aimed at forcing my withdrawal from civic affairs.

There has been a vindictive and targeted drive against me by NWFOI since 2014. Among tactics used by NWFOI to intimidate me and harass me are the posting of images of me on Twitter and Facebook without my consent and the publishing of a press statement which refers to my presence at a demonstration and re-tweets I made in 2014. In the statement, NWFOI accuses me of anti-Semitism which I regard as a malicious slur.

NWFOI have shared details of my workplace, something I can only regard as a breach of personal safety that places myself and my work colleagues in fear of reprisals. NWFOI have gone further and have contacted various civil organisations and public bodies petitioning them to stop engaging with me.

At no time have NWFOI disclosed the full facts behind their long-running campaign against me. They fail to mention that Mr Raphi Bloom (Co-chairman of NWFOI) was interviewed by the police in 2014 because of his behaviour towards me.

Another fact that has been omitted from the NWFOI press statement which is currently being circulated is that Mr Bloom had complained to NHS England in 2014 about my participation in political protests during the Israeli attack on Gaza in the summer of that year. Following an investigation, which doubtless took a toll on my personal and professional life, NHS England and the General Medical Council concluded no wrongdoing on my part. In my statement in response at the time I explained my presence at the protest in Manchester during the military offensive was to highlight my concerns about the Palestinian people. I also made clear that my retweets were not endorsements. Furthermore, in 2014, I clearly stated that I was "sorry to learn of the disappointment caused by my tweets and would be more mindful of my actions". The statement was accepted by Mr Bloom and the matter closed by all parties.

Since then I have worked tirelessly on speaking out against racism, xenophobia and hate crime and have been involved in interfaith work to build rapport and trust between faith and non-faith communities. Yet, despite this and the conclusion of matters arising from Mr Bloom's initial complaint to NHS England, the harassment and coordinated attacks have continued. In the press statement circulated by NWFOI, they go so far as to mis-describe one of my retweets as a tweet in their attempt to besmirch my reputation.

I find all of this to be deeply troubling and stressful.

I have taken pains to work with different communities to challenge the scourge of racism and xenophobia and the consequences of hate crime which affects all in our society. I firmly believe that there is much more that unites us than divides us and my engagement in civic affairs in Manchester is to ensure that this mantra becomes a reality as lived experience in our great city.

I wish to make clear that I am not and never have been anti-Semitic. My work in the community is ample evidence of this."

Vaseem Ahmed

It has been suggested that Vaseem Ahmed's Twitter background (featured left) is an attempt to propagate the anti-semitic troup of Israel attempting to take over the UK. Far from displaying any kind of 'take-over', the image is actually a representation of land mass on a scale that is relatable to the British public.



Mr Ahmed has responded to these allegations with the following statement:

"The shrinking green areas over time accurately reflects the shrinking pattern of Palestinian land since 1967.

Their superimposition on a map of the UK simply allows people to get a sense of the amount of land that has decreased, since they will be easier able to relate it to areas or places they are familiar with, and for people in the UK this would naturally be

the UK. Indeed, such an image could be superimposed on any country to make the same point.

It certainly doesn't suggest "Israel is taking over Britain". In fact, if it did it would suggest that Israel has already 'taken over' most of the UK part from parts of Wales and the North East of England, which would be a ridiculous conclusion to draw.

It does imply a criticism of Israel. However, that is not the same as anti-Semitism.

I actively and unequivocally condemn any form of racism against Jews or anti-Semitism."