

Press Statement on James Foley

First and foremost, let's be clear, Islam prohibits the killing of any civilian regardless of nationality, ideology or creed. Let us further make clear that the principles and maxims of justice in Islam are unparalleled. Allah says in the Glorious Qur'an:

"Oh you who believe! Be ever steadfast in upholding equity and justice, bearing witness to the truth for the sake of God, even though it be against yourselves, or your parents and kin. Whether the person concerned be rich or poor, God's claim takes precedence over [the claims of] either of them. Do not, then, follow your own desires, lest you swerve from justice. If you distort [the truth] or decline to do justice, then [know that] God is indeed aware of all that you do." [Qur'an 4:135]

The killing of James Foley, a man who put his life at risk trying to expose the world to the suffering of the Syrian people at the hands of the tyrant, Bashar was wrong on all levels, barbaric and inhumane carried out by a senseless group of criminals whose actions represent Islam as much as cannibals eating dead Muslim corpses in Central African Republic represent Christianity. The psychology of ISIS is one so brute that it is even alien in the animal kingdom.

In relation to this tragic murder, there has been much media speculation, in recent news, that Khadijah Dare (the woman who made grossly crude and insensitive comments about this case via social media) attended our Centre as she was a resident in this Borough. As we have previously stated, our Centre is open to the public like any other place of worship, and has many people, Muslim and non-Muslim attending, as we are the largest Mosque in the London Borough of Lewisham. It is rather unfortunate that time and time again, the media do not seem to understand that whether or not any individual, who has ever prayed in the mosque, has gone on to be involved in acts that are considered to be illegal, that this should in no way reflect on the mosque. In this instance, the young woman's desire to travel to Syria or her desire, as expressed in a recent Tweet to kill innocent people, has nothing to do with the Centre and/or any one of its staff. Mrs Dare's decision to travel to Syria and the comments that she makes are entirely of her volition and certainly do not reflect the centre's ethos or teachings.

Unfortunately, the Muslim community are being subjected to a burden of proof based on a "guilty by association" standard- something which we did not see during the recent Gaza offensive, for example, when no one asked British Jews to apologise for Israeli war crimes and rightly so. This is despite the fact that some British Jews fight in the IDF. It should also not be forgotten that when speaking of ISIS, we are speaking about a group whose victims have mostly been Muslims, even though the world and media alike have only really taken notice in view of recent events.

We consider Muslims being asked to condemn the death of the innocent James Foley as rather insulting given that it comes loaded with an islamophobic assumption that Muslims by default condone such brutality. All innocent lives taken in the pursuit of an ideal is tragic irrespective of whether it is carried out by the rogue ideology of ISIS members or by nation states - evil is evil and they are but two sides of the same coin, imbued with hate and greedy pursuits.

Our thoughts are with Mr Foley's family at this difficult time and the families of all those who have perished in the recent conflicts in Gaza, Syria, Burma, Central African Republic, Ukraine and indeed, Iraq.