



## PRESS RELEASE

### Proposals to close down Mosques

We are writing in response to the Government's new strategy to tackle extremism which was set out on Monday, 19 October 2015. Although we are concerned with the proposed strategy as a whole, we note in particular the plans to create powers to "close mosques where extremists meet".

It is rather unfortunate that the Prime Minister has singled out the Muslim community for special mention as he has done on previous occasions. For example, warning Muslim leaders that they had "a problem" if they objected to being asked to do more to tackle Islamist extremism in January 2015 [1]; or telling Muslims that they were "silently condoning extremism" in June 2015 [2]; or setting out his five year plan to deal with Islamic extremism at home, pinning all the blame on the Muslim community in July 2015 [3] and only earlier this month at the Tory Party conference, threatening to close down Madrasahs [4].

Successive governments continue to make the same mistakes and appear to think that the solution in dealing with matters concerning the Muslim community is to legislate and create further laws thereby highlighting the lack of any real strategy or thought into an issue which was recently described as "the greatest struggle of our generation" by the Prime Minister.

There is not a shred of evidence to suggest that meetings of "extremists" have been taking place at any Mosques as is being suggested and it is therefore disingenuous to suggest otherwise. This is the typical stereotypical comment one would associate and expect from ignorant right wing groups with a closed mind, not the Government of our Country.

The Muslim community and its institutions are part of the fabric of British society and the greatest of our institutions are our places of worship, the Mosques. In January 2015, your own Communities Secretary wrote to Islamic centres up and down the country stating:

*"British values are Muslim values. Like all faiths, Islam and its message of peace and unity make our country a better and stronger place, and Britain would be diminished without its strong Muslim communities. Every day, mosques and other faith institutions across the country are providing help for those in need, and acting as a centre for our communities."* [5].

Despite inviting our thoughts on the issues at the time, we have yet to receive any acknowledgement of our response sent to the Department of Communities and Local Government on the 26<sup>th</sup> January 2015 [6].

It is regrettable that the sanctity of our mosques is now being brought into disrepute through scaremongering and misinformation. With the lack of any clarity or evidence-based rationale with this recent policy, our communities are loud and clear in asking the Government to stop dragging our places of worship through politically motivated and empirically baseless draconian legislation.

Finally, in a week where we have seen Muslims being subjected to disgusting attacks on London's buses for no other reason other than their faith, we wait with anticipation to see if the Government will make any comments on this and the rising tide of Islamophobia in general.

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[1] <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/uk-muslim-leaders-outraged-after-eric-pickles-says-followers-of-islam-should-prove-their-identity-9988795.html>

[2] <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-33192306>

[3] <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2015/jul/20/the-four-pillars-of-david-camerons-counter-extremism-strategy>

[4] <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/oct/07/muslim-leaders-voice-concerns-about-tory-crackdown-on-madrasas>

[5] <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/eric-pickles-letter-to-muslim-leaders-the-text-in-full-9987249.html>

[6] <http://www.lewishamislamiccentre.com/pressrelease.php>

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