



## Who are the Real Hate Preachers?

On the 15th of April 2017 two articles appeared, one in the Daily Mail **[1]** and the other in the Daily Telegraph **[2]**, speaking negatively about a Primary School visit to Lewisham Islamic Centre hosted by Imam Shakeel Begg.

Encouraging inclusivity rather than isolationism in attempting to change society for the better seems diametrically opposed to pedlars of a certain ideological worldview. Unfortunately we find today that many groups and journalists promote the Nazi method of repeating a lie a thousand times so that it becomes the "truth". This despicable propaganda campaign was waged against Jews in the most horrific way imaginable. Today, that method is still used to carry out the character assassination of people and groups who the attacker doesn't like or sees as a threat. This is certainly the case with respect to the allegation in the articles concerning the murderers of Lee Rigby who have no association with the Lewisham Islamic Centre. We have previously made this clear in our press statement on the 23rd of December 2013 **[3]** which is on our website.

These Articles are once again based on the spurious works of the right-wing Henry Jackson Society whose position towards Islam and Muslims we have already highlighted and raised our concerns regarding in our press statement of 22nd March 2017 **[4]**. We also remind the media and those in the public eye of their duty to report responsibly and accurately – having due regard of how our messages are received and understood by our audiences is not exclusively the remit of Muslim speakers. The fact that those seeking to create discord over the school visit include the Henry Jackson Society and Katie Hopkins speaks volumes about what they stand for and what the agenda is.

As regards the judgment, it should be noted that this was the view of one person (the Judge) that on the balance of probabilities, some statements Imam Begg had made over the years such as speaking out in support of the rights of oppressed Muslims to defend themselves in the face of being terrorised and facing disproportionate aggression, amounted to a call to violence. Imam Begg rejects this in the strongest possible terms **[5]**. He has never called for or supported unlawful violence or terrorism. His views about a people's right to defend themselves are no different to what is enshrined in the Geneva Convention.

The Lewisham Islamic Centre remains a cherished and important institution within the London Borough of Lewisham, and being the central Mosque, it is at the heart of the Borough's Muslim community who make up 6% of Lewisham's population, making it the second largest religion in the borough.

The Lewisham Islamic Centre is known for its commitment to promoting community cohesion, its work alongside Schools and Colleges, its work with the homeless, engaging with the youth, Police and gang mediation; its interfaith and community work; providing advice and counselling and much more for all members of the community. The Lewisham Islamic Centre is proud to have been at the forefront of, and in leading many of these community initiatives. We refer you to our 'Events & Activities' section of our website to get a glimpse of the work that we are involved in.

We therefore wish to remind our friends, colleagues and partners in the London Borough of Lewisham, from among Schools, Community Groups, Police, Faith Groups etc. and many others, that they should not be terrorised by those whose sole objective is to create mistrust, suspicion and to disrupt community cohesion that we have all worked so hard to establish. Let us also never forget that hawkers of hate were unsurprisingly involved in maligning other minority communities before, including leaders such as Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela. However, that did not detract them or their friends from abandoning the cause for peace and justice. We thank you all for the courage that you have shown in not allowing yourselves to be deterred by false allegations and to be guided by your own first-hand knowledge and experience of the Lewisham Islamic Centre and Imam Begg.

We look forward to continuing to work with you all and we will continue to strive to embody the teaching of Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of God be upon him) that:

***"The best of society are those who benefit society the most."***

**References:** (Copy & paste links in your browser)

[1]<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4415544/Primary-school-took-pupils-meet-extremist-imam.html>

[2]<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/04/15/children-taken-meet-islamic-preacher-hadpromoted-encouraged/>

[3]<http://www.lewishamislamiccentre.com/downloads/upload/13-12-23%20Response%20to%20the%20Telegraph%20Article.pdf>

[4]<http://www.lewishamislamiccentre.com/documents/pressrelease/The%20Times%20article%20of%2020%20March%202017%202%20-%202022-03-17.pdf>

[5]<http://www.lewishamislamiccentre.com/downloads/upload/Imam%20Shakeel%20Begg%20Clarification%20of%20Previous%20Statements%202019-12-13.pdf>