



PRESS RELEASE 22/01/19

The Lewisham Islamic Centre responds to the lies from the usual suspects regarding our Scouts activity

We continue to be appalled by the ever downward spiral in standard of some sections of the British press. While the likes of the Sun and the Daily Mail are in our opinion seasoned champions and purveyors of fake and twisted news and Islamophobia, to see broadsheets which normally command an air of respectability and credibility vis-a-vis the Times and the Telegraph now running worse editorials on the same story carried in the Daily Mail is truly staggering.

The Telegraph which broke this "story" conflated a number of issues and created its own fairy tale but sadly left out the prized unicorn. We can categorically confirm that the Lewisham Islamic Centre has not been suspended by The Scouts for any extremism fears or for any concerns regarding segregation as has been spitefully alleged, and neither have we been contacted by the Police.

The inaccuracies in the Telegraph article written by Camilla Tominey are embarrassing for want of truth. For example, she makes the laughable claim that Ahammed Hussain worked at the Olive Tree School in Luton, when Mr Hussain has never visited Luton let alone worked there.

In addition, The Times article written by Anna Behrmann makes the absurd claim that Asghar Bukhari was the founder of the Lewisham Islamic Centre. This was also foolishly repeated by Leigh McNanus of the Daily Mail. Mr Bukhari, formerly of MPACUK we understand was born in 1970; the Centre was founded in or around 1975, which means that according to The Times and Daily Mail, Mr Bukhari was only 5 years of age at the time the Lewisham Islamic Centre was founded! While we appreciate precocious talents like everyone else, we firmly believe that everyone should at least complete statutory education before venturing into the world increasingly fantasised by such preposterous reporting. The Centre's founder of course is Dr Sabiha Saleem - a fully fledged adult - as is proudly displayed on our website.

The Lewisham Islamic Centre has been involved with scouts work for the past decade. The Scouts is an old British tradition having been formed in the U.K. Today, Indonesia, the largest Muslim-populated country, has the largest Scouts membership in the world. We believe the Scouts are important in supporting young people in their physical, mental and spiritual development so that they may play constructive roles in society, with a strong focus on the environment.

As to the allegation that Ahammed Hussain informs children that they are Muslim first, we couldn't agree more. The Telegraph's assertion that identifying oneself as Muslim first is against "British Values" is a direct insinuation that being Muslim contradicts being British. In addition and ironically, "duty to God" being one of the foremost principles of Scouting - a point clearly overlooked,

perhaps altogether alien, by the sensationalist authors in question - one must therefore question their "British Values". Islam defines us and its ethos and guidance provides its true adherents escape from petty nationalism, racism, xenophobia, and from slandering innocents of any background. All too often we hear from prominent politicians and the media that "Britain is a Christian country", the doctrines of which are clearly alien to nationalism, racism, xenophobia and slander. Not once have these despicable people opened their maws to question the contradiction of being a Christian with "British Values". And as we approach world hijab day on 1st February which aims to raise awareness and improve religious tolerance for all, the Lewisham Islamic Centre will be offering its full support to all those decent people of all denominations who support the basic right of a woman to choose her apparel.

The allegation that Ahammed Hussain is a Holocaust denier, again, is wholly untrue and a libellous statement. We have no doubt he will be successful in his upcoming defamation claims against the papers, InshaAllah (God willing). The Lewisham Islamic Centre has also filed its complaint with the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO).

Finally, we are not surprised to see the discredited and right wing organisation, the Henry Jackson Society (HJS), called upon to give backing to this libellous story given that credible, mainstream sources prefer edifying rather than flea-ridden company. The HJS continues to direct its efforts and questionable funding against the Lewisham Islamic Centre hoping to succeed in their objective of harming the Centre. Appraising their performance can only return one result: 'inadequate, inadequate, inadequate'. We say to the HJS to reflect on the words of our creator, Allah who says:

"If Allah is your helper none can overcome you, and if He withdraws His help from you, who is there who can help you? In Allah let believers put their trust" [Qur'an 3:160]

We offer further timeless advice to the publications in question that betray their trust to society as truth tellers and fact checkers, and rather revel in sowing misinformation in contempt of society:

"Produce your evidence if you are truthful" [Qur'an 27:64]

In the meantime, the Lewisham Islamic Centre will continue in its Islamic path to empower Muslims and non-Muslims alike, without fear or favour. We will continue with our Scouts Programme; Youth Education; Youth Club; Football Team; Workshops on ending youth violence & knife crime; Gang Mediation Initiatives; Parenting Workshops; Fostering Workshops; Mental Health Awareness Workshops; Feed The Homeless Project; Political Participation Programmes; Interfaith and Social Reform Initiatives to name but a few. LIC's work ensures Muslim Youth are engaged in society as proud Muslim members and equal citizens. We seek no recognition but the pleasure of Allah the truly Mighty One. If the Centre is being demonised, know that it is because we are teaching our community to be citizens, not mewling subjects.... Everyone is welcome.