

Response to the Telegraph Article

It is with regret that the Telegraph, namely its editors Sam Marsden and Tom Whitehead published an article with a large photo of the Centre featuring prominently in its article on 19 December 2013 entitled “*Lee Rigby killers had links to Lewisham mosque that 'attracts radicals'*”. The article is seeking to mislead and implicate the Centre to the unlawful killing of Lee Rigby which is wholly baseless and without foundation. As was set out in our press release on 19 December 2013, at no point has the Centre formed part of the criminal investigations into the killing of Mr Rigby (see <http://www.lewishamislamiccentre.com/downloads/upload/Press%20Release%2019-12-13.pdf>.) and it has been made unequivocally clear that the murderers of Lee Rigby were in no way, shape or form associated with our Centre. It is clear from our website that the Centre is a well-regarded institution within the London Borough of Lewisham as is noted by the various testimonials on our website (<http://www.lewishamislamiccentre.com/new/testimonials.php>).

It is therefore clear that the Telegraph had no basis for putting up the headline that they had or using the photo of the Centre as they had done. We believe their actions are nothing short of gutter journalism and it's a sad indictment that the Telegraph is using the tragic killing of Lee Rigby to create discord and hate within communities. We believe they have acted extremely irresponsibly particularly as witnessed on 20 December 2013 with the jailing of three men for the firebombing of Grimsby Mosque following the murder of Mr Rigby last May. The arson attack on the mosque in that case was preceded by calls on the Facebook page of the English Defence League's (“EDL”) Grimsby division for the building to be burned down. The effect that the irresponsible journalism in this instance would have on the far right, was therefore entirely predictable and unfortunately, as would have been reasonably predicted by any right minded person, the EDL immediately posted a link to the Telegraph report on its Facebook page, resulting in a spate of violent threats by EDL supporters against Lewisham Islamic Centre, a selection of which included the following comments:

“burn it to the ground”; “blow it up”; “burn it down”; “this one needs burning down”;

“grenades please”; “burn it preferably after you chain the doors during Friday prayers”.

The article is therefore a clear manifesto for causing hate crime against the Centre and/or Muslims in the area and the Telegraph should bear responsibility for any attack on the Centre and /or Muslims in the area for generating an atmosphere of fear and hostility.

Lewisham Islamic Centre - 23 December 2013