

A large, abstract graphic of red and blue ink splatters radiating from the center, creating a starburst effect against a white background. The splatters are thick and textured, with many fine lines extending outwards.

**SIDING
WITH THE
OPPRESSOR:**
The Pro-Islamist Left

ONE LAW *for* ALL

The One Law for All Campaign was launched on 10 December 2008, International Human Rights Day, to call on the UK Government to recognise that Sharia and religious courts are arbitrary and discriminatory against women and children in particular and that citizenship and human rights are non-negotiable. The Campaign aims to end Sharia and all religious courts on the basis that they work against, and not for, equality and human rights.

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Siding with the Oppressor: The Pro-Islamist Left

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***Siding with the Oppressor:
The Pro-Islamist Left***

By John Miller

Postscript: The politics of betrayal, by Maryam Namazie

'Calls for an Islamic state by some corners should not scare us nor should it bring about a negative reaction. [...] In Muslim countries where Islam forms a focal point of history and society, this must not be dismissed as mere political or ideological fanaticism, but rather viewed as a collective aspiration.' Anas al-Tikriti, Vice President, Stop the War Coalition

'Now I'm in favour of defending gay rights, but I am not prepared to have it as a shibboleth, [created by] people who ... won't defend George Galloway, and who regard the state of Israel as somehow a viable presence, justified in occupying Palestinian territories.' Lindsey German, Convenor, Stop the War Coalition

'Let's not down the winning formula for our broad movement with all sorts of political demands.' Alex Callinicos, Founding Member, Stop the War Coalition

'I believe in the Judgement Day. All of you do. I believe that one day we will have to answer to the Almighty, for what we did, and what we did not do, with the life that God gave us. And I just say this, and I ask you to say it, especially to other religious people: how will you explain, on the last day, that you had a chance, on 29 March, 2012, to vote either for the guy who led the great campaign against the slaughter of millions of people in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere, you could have voted for him, but instead you voted, because of village politics, you voted for a party that's killed a million Iraqis, which has killed a hundred thousand Afghans, which has supported Israel killing uncountable numbers of Palestinians. How are you going to explain that one? You had a choice. Not the normal choice. Not Labour or Tory. Not Labour or Tory or Liberal. You had a choice of voting for the leading opponent of these crimes, against these crimes, but you chose instead to reward the party that committed these crimes. How are you going to explain that on the Judgement Day?' George Galloway, Leader, Respect Party, campaigning in 2012

'I'm quite a fan of Mahmoud Admadinejad [sic] who is adored by the common man and woman in Iran. Anyone who vows to narrow the gap between rich and poor can't be all that bad....' Yvonne Ridley, Founding Member, Respect Party

'Democracy, if it means that, you know, at the expense of not implementing the Sharia, no-one's gonna agree with that. Of course no-one agrees with that.' Azad Ali, Vice Chair, Unite Against Fascism

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Introduction

Siding with the Oppressor: The Pro-Islamist Left has been written as a companion volume to *Enemies not Allies: The Far-Right*¹ to highlight some of the individuals and groups on the Left that defend Islamism.

Whilst this report focuses on the most conspicuous examples of the pro-Islamist Left in Britain – namely Stop the War Coalition, Respect Party, Unite Against Fascism and individuals such as Ken Livingstone and George Galloway – inferences and implications will assist the reader when scrutinising other organisations of a similar nature.

This damning report exposes their agenda and methods, including the use of accusations of racism and Islamophobia and their conflation of Muslim with Islamist in order to defend Islamism (which they see as anti-imperialist force) and Islam (which they view as an oppressed religion) rather than out of any real concern for prejudice against Muslims or the rights of ‘Muslims’ who are incidentally the first victims of Islamism. Challenging this perspective is especially important given its wide acceptance as ‘progressive’ in mainstream society.

Like the far-Right which ‘despises’ multiculturalism yet benefits from its idea of difference to scapegoat the ‘other’ and promote its own form of white identity politics, the pro-Islamist Left also uses multiculturalism to side with the oppressor by viewing the ‘Muslim community’ and ‘Muslim world’ as homogeneous entities thereby ignoring and silencing dissenters. This politics of betrayal sides with the Islamic far-Right and the oppressor.

Any principled point of view must oppose all forms of fascism, including Islamic fascism and side with the countless people, many of whom are Muslim, who are fighting and challenging Islamism here in Europe as well as the Middle East, North Africa and across the world.

1 Barnett, A. and Namazie, M., *Enemies not Allies: The Far-Right, One Law for All*, 2011. At: www.onelawforall.org.uk/new-report-enemies-not-allies-the-far-right/

Stop the War Coalition

The Stop the War Coalition (StWC) was founded on 21 September 2001 in a meeting at Friends Meeting House in Euston, following the terrorist attacks in America ten days earlier. This founding event was organised by the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), which had held a meeting on 14 September which it said 'attracted a number of activists from outside the SWP who wanted to talk about what could be done'.²

Many people were opposed to possible military action after the 9/11 attacks, but some activists found in late 2001 that the StWC was unfit to represent them. This was mostly due to its undemocratic behaviour and its positions regarding Islamist terrorism. These features became more apparent as the Coalition progressed, especially with regard to Islamism.

According to a report of its early meetings by one activist, the SWP refused to use the word 'condemn' about the 9/11 attacks in the Coalition's statement of aims. They preferred to say they did not 'condone' the attacks. The activist said they 'buckled under pressure' in late October 2001 and used the word condemn, but as with the earlier text, made no mention of the attacks in Pennsylvania and Washington. The report notes that: *'When challenged, [StWC convener] Lindsey German assured us that: "Of course we criticise these attacks as well. When we say New York, we mean America." If that is the case why not say so? And "criticism", comrade German, is not the same as "condemnation", as you well know.'*

At a meeting that November, a resolution was presented that said the Coalition should 'oppose imperialism and attacks on Muslims and migrants, condemn the terrorist attacks on the USA, oppose the Taliban,' and work for 'democracy and secularism everywhere.' These proposals were defeated in a vote, and the groups who put them forward were excluded from the Coalition by the SWP.

A resolution by Iraqi and Iranian leftists 'criticising Islamic terrorism' was also voted down, prompting them to exclude themselves from the Coalition in protest. They said: *'the StWC chose not to say anything against Islamic terrorism, adopting a platform devoid of any condemnation of political Islam, its states*

2 Murray, A. and German, L., *Stop the War: the story of Britain's biggest mass movement*, Bookmarks Publications, 2005, p. 47-48

and organizations as a pole in the ongoing bloody conflict between the two poles of international terrorism'.³

These and other calls for secularism and opposition to Islamism were rejected by the Coalition, which explained that 'we will have more people on our marches if we do not raise too much politics,' and that 'the call for secularism will alienate the hundreds and thousands of Muslims on our marches.' The Socialist Workers Party's Alex Callinicos is reported to have said: '*Let's not down the winning formula for our broad movement with all sorts of political demands.*'⁴

Over the years, the confrontation between StWC and Iranian and Iraqi Leftists who were anti-war and also anti-Islamist continued, including via criticism of the former's policies⁵ or at the rallies themselves. In one such confrontation in September 2006, an Iranian women's rights campaigner was manhandled by their organisers.⁶

StWC and the Muslim Association of Britain I

In 2002 the StWC made an alliance with the Muslim Association of Britain (MAB). Coalition literature says that its leaders wanted more people to attend their demonstrations, and that they thought working with the MAB might be helpful since the latter 'organised a major Palestine solidarity demonstration in the Spring' and were planning another for September.

The Coalition say the MAB contacted them about merging this rally ('to mark the anniversary of the second Intifada') with the Coalition's Iraq war protest, which was planned to coincide with that year's Labour Party conference. The StWC agreed, as they put it, 'in the interest of building the biggest possible protest which could have a real impact on the Labour Party and hence on government policy'.⁷

3 www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/51/253.html

4 <http://web.archive.org/web/20070930015944/www.cpgb.org.uk/worker/406/november18.html>

5 http://maryamnamazie.com/tv/on_left_progressive_critique_of_Islam.html

6 <http://freethoughtblogs.com/maryamnamazie/2006/09/30/womens-rights-activists-manhandled-by-stop-the-war-coalition-organisers-in-the-demonstration-in-manchester/>

7 Murray, A. and German, L., *Stop the War: the story of Britain's biggest mass movement*, Bookmarks Publications, 2005, p. 81-82

The MAB's account of the origins of this alliance is somewhat different. Their leaders have said that the MAB was invited to affiliate to the StWC in late 2001. The MAB leaders said they refused this offer and instead proposed a 'partnership' and a 'jointly organised demonstration against the war in Afghanistan,' but that these ideas were not taken seriously by the Coalition.

After the MAB's well-attended rallies in April and May on Palestine, the MAB say the Coalition's Andrew Murray and Lindsey German requested a meeting and travelled to the MAB's office, where they negotiated 'very much on the Muslim Association's terms'.⁸

They also claim that the terms rejected by the StWC in 2001 were accepted less than a year later. It was agreed that the MAB would not affiliate to the Coalition but that they would 'work together on a national basis as equal partners,' and 'remain a distinct and autonomous bloc able to shape the agenda'.⁹ The jointly organised anti-war protest the MAB had proposed would also go ahead, only this time the subject would be Iraq.

A compromise slogan was drawn up by the two groups for the protest: 'Don't attack Iraq, Freedom for Palestine.'¹⁰ The MAB had wanted the demonstration to be about Israel/Palestine, which they said was 'the cause of all problems in the Middle East.' They agreed to protest against the Iraq war as well, but they printed their own leaflets which reversed the clauses of the slogan.¹¹

Several attendees of the 28 September protest heard and saw anti-Jewish slogans and imagery, including a painted umbrella that read 'Jews are the sons of dogs and pigs.' Stewards and participants confirmed this in letters to the press, and said they had tried to 'marginalise' and 'drown out' these elements.¹² MAB spokesperson Anas al-Tikriti was asked in an interview about placards waved at the protest that likened Israel to Nazi Germany. He said he was sorry this message 'didn't come out as strongly as we'd have liked it to'.¹³

According to research by the Institute of Race Relations, the StWC's relationship with the MAB meant the latter was 'elevated from a relatively obscure group

8 <http://rac.sagepub.com/content/50/2/101> (p. 103)

9 Ibid. p. 104

10 Murray, A. and German, L., *Stop the War: the story of Britain's biggest mass movement*, Bookmarks Publications, 2005, p. 148

11 <http://rac.sagepub.com/content/50/2/101> (p. 104)

12 www.guardian.co.uk/theguardian/2002/oct/02/guardianletters1?INTCMP=SRCH

13 www.opendemocracy.net/globalization-protest/article_666.jsp

to one with a national profile,' and saw its membership more than double in a matter of months.¹⁴

What is the Muslim Association of Britain?

The Muslim Association of Britain is understood to be a branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, a far-Right Islamist group with increasing power in North Africa and the Middle East. The MAB was founded in 1997 by Kamal el-Helbawy,¹⁵ a lifelong member of the Muslim Brotherhood who was at that time its spokesperson and representative in Europe.¹⁶

After the Egyptian revolution in 2011 Kamal el-Helbawy appeared on the BBC¹⁷ and elsewhere as a member of the Muslim Brotherhood. He resigned from the Brotherhood in 2012 over differences with its leaders and actions. A recent newspaper profile of him in the Egypt Independent said: *'In spite of his resignation from the group and public criticism of its decisions and leaders, Helbawy's heart is still with the Muslim Brotherhood. "Even when I criticize publicly, I'm hoping it helps reform them," he says. "I can never detach myself completely from the Muslim Brotherhood, even if I wanted to"'*.¹⁸

El-Helbawy's role in founding the MAB, along with others 'who, back in their original countries, were members of the Muslim Brotherhood,' has been confirmed by the MAB, although it claims to be independent, and to have been founded by people outside the Muslim Brotherhood as well.¹⁹

However, even when claiming independence the MAB tends to praise the Muslim Brotherhood. In a 2004 statement the MAB said: *'MAB enjoys good relation with every mainstream Islamic organisation in the UK and abroad among them is Muslim Brotherhood which is well respected not only by the common people on the street throughout the Arab and Muslim countries but also by politicians, intellectuals and opinion-makers in most Arab countries. Prominent within their ideology is the urging of dialogue with others, the rejection of terrorism and respecting those whom differ in views or opinions.'* [sic]

14 <http://rac.sagepub.com/content/50/2/101> (p. 105)

15 www.hudson.org/files/publications/Current_Trends_Islamist_Ideology_v2.pdf

16 www.egyptindependent.com/news/profile-kamal-al-helbawy-defector-conscience

17 www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-12356922

18 www.egyptindependent.com/news/profile-kamal-al-helbawy-defector-conscience

19 www.ihr.org.uk/show.php?id=1216

It continued: *'MAB reserves the right to be proud of the humane notions and principles of the Muslim Brotherhood, who has proven to be an inspiration to Muslims, Arab and otherwise for many decades.'*²⁰

Leading MAB member Anas Al-Tikriti, writing in *The Times* in 2004, said: 'MAB is an independent British organisation. Links with others extend simply to shared ideas, values and expertise, in which the Brotherhood is indeed rich, with around eight decades of experience.'²¹

At a StWC conference in January 2003 an MAB speaker said that the MAB was proud to be associated with the Muslim Brotherhood.²²

The MAB's website has recommended the websites of the Muslim Brotherhood and Pakistan's Jamaat-e-Islami as recently as 2006.²³ (Jamaat-e-Islami is the South-Asian equivalent of the Muslim Brotherhood.)

The MAB's protests in 2002 about Palestine which impressed the leadership of the StWC were promoted by an Islamist website as follows: 'the Muslim Brotherhood launch biggest Palestine rally in the UK'.²⁴

A newspaper published by the MAB for the September 2002 Stop the War protest suggested that apostasy from Islam could be a 'religious offence punishable by death,' and said the MAB shares the Muslim Brotherhood's goal for 'the widespread implementation of Islam as a way of life; no longer to be sidelined as merely a religion'.²⁵

The MAB has organised and promoted events with Anwar al-Awlaki²⁶ at a time when he was wanted for questioning by the FBI, over his involvement with the 9/11 attackers.²⁷ Awlaki has since been linked to a number of al-Qaeda related attacks, including the Fort Hood shootings in 2009, the plot to blow up a Detroit-bound airplane that Christmas, the attempted car-bombing in Time

20 www.ihrc.org.uk/show.php?id=1216

21 www.workersliberty.org/node/3026

22 www.workersliberty.org/node/6805

23 <http://web.archive.org/web/20030604135832/http://mabonline.net/links/index.htm>

24 www.hudson.org/files/publications/Current_Trends_Islamist_Ideology_v2.pdf (p. 35)

25 www.workersliberty.org/node/6805

26 <http://web.archive.org/web/20030601075509/http://www.mabonline.net/branches/events/2bamuslim2003conf/2bamuslim2003conf.htm>

27 www.currenttrends.org/research/detail/the-making-of-the-christmas-day-bomber

Square in 2010,²⁸ and the cartridge bomb plot of that October.²⁹ He was killed in a drone strike in 2011 near his headquarters in Yemen.³⁰

In a public debate with One Law for All in 2011, Omar El-Hamdoon, president of the MAB, defended the right of a man to beat his wife, (as long as no mark is left on her body), and indicated that he thinks there should be stonings and amputations under an Islamic state.³¹

At the time of its alliance with the StWC, one of the MAB's leaders was Azzam Tamimi,³² a long-time member of the Muslim Brotherhood³³ who has held important positions in its Jordanian Branch. These included editing its weekly newspaper from 1989 to 1992, being official spokesman for the group and a director of its political wing.³⁴ Tamimi has had an intimate relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood and is a supporter of Hamas, its Palestinian offshoot, whose leaders he has been described as being friends with by sympathetic reviewers.³⁵

In an interview with the BBC in late 2004, Tamimi was asked whether, since he advocated suicide-bombing in Israel, he was willing to do it himself. He replied that given the opportunity to do so, he would. The following is an extract from the interview:

Tim Sebastian (interviewer): [...] If it's so wonderful to go and blow yourself up in a public place in Israel, why don't you do it?

[...] Tamimi: Not a single person of those who bomb themselves, bomb themselves because they are desperate or poor. It doesn't happen because of this. They do it because they want to sacrifice themselves for a cause after all avenues have been closed before them. If the Palestinians today are given F16s and Apache helicopters...

28 <http://icsr.info/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/1315827595ICSRPaperAsAmericanAsApplePieHowAnwaralAwlakiBecameTheFaceOfWesternJihad.pdf> (Appendix, p. 83-90)

29 <http://icsr.info/2012/05/icsr-insight-al-qaedas-most-dangerous-franchise/>

30 www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/al-qaeda/8800346/Anwar-al-Awlaki-Drone-kills-US-born-preacher-who-inspired-lone-wolf-terrorists.html

31 www.onelawforall.org.uk/successful-debate-on-sharia-law-in-britain-at-house-of-commons/

32 <http://rac.sagepub.com/content/50/2/101> (p. 104)

33 <http://mondediplo.com/2000/04/03tanzim>

34 www.hudson.org/files/publications/Current_Trends_Islamist_Ideology_v2.pdf (p. 35, 36)

35 www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=20088

Sebastian: No, please come back to my question. Please come back to my question. Why if it is so glorious and honourable to do this, why don't you do it?

Tamimi: I would do it...

Sebastian: When?

Tamimi: If I have the opportunity I would do it...

Sebastian: When are you going to do it?

Tamimi: When? If I can go to Palestine and sacrifice myself I would do it. Why not?

Sebastian: So what's stopping you?

Tamimi: I cannot go to Palestine. I cannot go to Palestine.

Sebastian: You simply can't get in?

Tamimi: No, I cannot get in.

[...] Sebastian: So this is the reason – the only thing that is holding you back from strapping on a suicide belt is the fact that you can't get back to the Palestinian territories?

Tamimi: You see sacrificing myself for Palestine is a noble cause. It is the straight way to pleasing my God and I would do it if I had the opportunity.³⁶

Tamimi has also taken part in the annual 'al-Quds day' event, which was started by the Ayatollah Khomeini, the late leader of Iran and one of the world's chief promoters and practitioners of Islamism. At one such event, standing beside a picture of Khomeini, who instigated the slaughter of tens of thousands of political dissidents,³⁷ Tamimi expressed gratitude to the Ayatollah for starting the event, and went on to praise Hamas, Islamic Jihad and Hezbollah. He also called for violent Jihad and the destruction of the state of Israel, which he said was a 'cancer in the body of humanity': *'Anybody in the world, with faith or without faith, must come together in order to eradicate this cancer from the body of humanity. We are ever grateful for the late Imam Khomeini for starting this occasion. [...] Those who resist, those who fight, those who put up a Jihad against racism and Zionism, are the true representatives of the Palestinians, and of all the Muslims, regarding the Palestinian issue. [...]*'.³⁸

36 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/hardtalk/3985403.stm>

37 www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/irans-srebrenica-how-ayatollah-khomeini-sanctioned-the-deaths-of-20000-enemies-of-the-state-8485984.html

38 www.youtube.com/watch?v=zh6q02J6dJk&feature=related

Another leader of the MAB at the time of its alliance with the StWC was Anas al-Tikriti. Tikriti was the MAB's director of media and public relations from 1997 to 2003 and its president from 2003 to 2004.³⁹

His father Osama al-Tikriti has been the leader of the Muslim Brotherhood in Iraq,⁴⁰ as the MAB has confirmed.⁴¹

Anas al-Tikriti has written that Hamas has been 'demonized and excommunicated by the western world and its media,' and called on the British government to recognise it as the chosen representative of the Palestinians.⁴² He has also criticized the Muslim Council of Britain for dropping its plan to boycott Holocaust Memorial Day, which he said had been a principled stand.⁴³

Mohammed Sawalha was president of the Muslim Association of Britain from 2001 to 2003.⁴⁴ Sawalha was described by a BBC investigation as a fugitive Hamas commander responsible for finance and logistical assistance who fled to London in 1990. It went on: 'From London, Sawalha is said to have master minded much of Hamas' political and military strategy'.⁴⁵ He has also been called 'manager of the political committee' of the Muslim Brotherhood on its website.⁴⁶

Osama Saeed was a spokesperson for the MAB during its alliance with the StWC.⁴⁷ He has also been the MAB's representative in Scotland.⁴⁸

In 2005 Saeed wrote an article in the *Guardian* calling for the restoration of the Islamic caliphate, which he said should be governed by Sharia. He said opponents of this proposal 'give credence' to the idea that the west is conducting a war on Islam, and called on Britain and the US to support the project.⁴⁹

39 www.anas-altikriti.com/main.swf

40 www.hudson.org/files/publications/Current_Trends_Islamist_Ideology_v2.pdf (p. 36)

41 www.ihrc.org.uk/show.php?id=1216

42 www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2009/sep/21/hamas-al-qaida?commentpage=3

43 www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2007/dec/04/forgettingtoremember

44 <http://rac.sagepub.com/content/50/2/101> (p. 112)

45 www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/wikileaks/8475290/Islamist-extremism-so-did-we-cure-the-problem.html

46 www.hudson-ny.org/1545/lawfare-in-the-uk-who-is-behind-it-this-time

47 www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2005/nov/01/religion.world

48 www.osamasaeed.org/osama/files/SBCCU3.pdf

49 www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2005/nov/01/religion.world

The information above demonstrates that the Muslim Association of Britain is an Islamist organisation affiliated to the Muslim Brotherhood.

StWC and the Muslim Association of Britain II

In the weeks before the Iraq war, the StWC promoted its February 2003 demonstration as being jointly organised by the Muslim Association of Britain and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.⁵⁰

The MAB boasted of the large turnout on its website: 'This event has been titled as 'Britain's biggest ever demonstration' and will go down in history as a day to be remembered'.⁵¹

This protest and the large crowd it drew cemented the relationship between the StWC and the MAB. Anas al-Tikriti, then president of the MAB, is currently a vice president of the StWC,⁵² been elected in 2009 and subsequent years.⁵³ Tikriti's Guardian profile says that 'as spokesman and then President of the Muslim Association of Britain, Anas Altikriti co-organised and led more than 15 demonstrations against the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq as well as against the Israeli occupation of Palestine'.⁵⁴

Tikriti, Azzam Tamimi and Mohammed Sawalha were involved in organising Stop the War events⁵⁵ and held meetings with the Coalition's leaders on 'trying to introduce a more assertive Muslim intervention in British politics, particularly around international issues'.⁵⁶

The MAB itself had a place on the steering committee of the StWC as early as 2004.⁵⁷

50 http://mouv4x8.perso.neuf.fr/11Sept01/N030215a.Info_LONDRES_by_Stop_War_Coalition.pdf

51 <http://web.archive.org/web/20030605154556/www.mabonline.net/branches/events/15feb2002march/internationaldemoday15.02.03.htm>

52 www.stopwar.org.uk/index.php/about/steering-committee-and-officers

53 <http://web.archive.org/web/20091127062710/http://stopwar.org.uk/content/view/20/52/>

54 www.guardian.co.uk/global/2007/jun/03/resource2

55 Phillips, R., 'Standing together: the Muslim Association of Britain and the anti-war movement', *Race & Class* 2008, Vol. 50, Sage Publications, Institute of Race Relations, p. 105, 108

56 Murray, A. and German, L., *Stop the War: the story of Britain's biggest mass movement*, Bookmarks Publications, 2005, p. 83

57 <http://web.archive.org/web/20040803012449/http://stopwar.org.uk/about.asp>

In January 2003 members of the Alliance for Workers Liberty proposed that the StWC sever all links with the MAB, but were defeated in a vote. (In the StWC's account of this episode, the proposal 'secured just one vote' out of several hundred delegates.)⁵⁸

Responding to criticism, the StWC has not only defended its alliance with the Muslim Association of Britain, but has gone further and defended the nature of the MAB. In its official history, it said: *'The leadership of the Coalition is proud of its association with the MAB [...] MAB has been subjected to an enormous amount of abuse [...] It has been branded as a reactionary fundamentalist organisation, as a front for Egyptian terrorists, and as anti-Semitic. None of these charges are true.'*

It went on to say 'MAB's actual objectives are clear and reasonable' and quoted from the About section of the MAB's website, which it said 'expose[s] the characterisation of MAB as 'reactionary fundamentalists' as the racist lie that it is'.⁵⁹

Lindsey German, convenor of the StWC and co-author of the book mentioned above, defended the MAB in a 2004 Guardian article. German suggested that criticism of the MAB was really an attack on all Muslims in Britain. She went on to set up and knock down several straw men about sexism and homophobia being exclusively practiced by Muslims, or being widespread among Muslims: *'For any socialist, the defence of sexual equality and freedom must be unconditional. But we cannot, in the process, join in the attacks on those very Muslims who are at the sharp end of racist attacks and Islamophobia in Britain. [...] Everyone should oppose homophobia and attacks on women from whichever source. But such views are far from being held by all Muslims, nor are they unique to Muslims. [...] It is also absurd to insinuate that homophobic attacks or wife-beating are exclusively Muslim problems. They are preponderantly found among the white majority in this country'*.⁶⁰

On making political alliances with Islamists, German deceptively conflated far-Right political organisations with individuals. She also seemed to favour the idea of working with people who do not share her values (on gay rights, for example) in order to achieve a large political movement:

58 Murray, A. and German, L., *Stop the War: the story of Britain's biggest mass movement*, Bookmarks Publications, 2005, p. 89

59 Ibid, p. 82-84

60 www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2004/jul/13/religion.world

'Of course, some Muslims - and non-Muslims - hold views on some social issues that are more conservative than those of the socialist and liberal left. But that should not be a barrier to collaboration over common concerns. Would a campaign for gay rights, for example, insist that all those who took part share the same view of the war in Iraq? That would be a road to the fragmentation of any progressive movement seeking to reach out beyond the traditional left'.⁶¹

German also said that to say the MAB is fascist was 'dangerously wide of the mark,' and called criticism of the MAB a witch hunt: 'It would be a catastrophe for the left to bow to the witch-hunt and turn its back on the Muslim community'.⁶²

Since allying with the MAB, the StWC has repeatedly shown its willingness to compromise its supposed principles. For example, the MAB's leaders expected the StWC to arrange 'gender segregated spaces' at meetings and demonstrations. The MAB hoped this would 'persuade [MAB] members that collaboration with non-Muslim anti-war activists was religiously permissible,' and to allow those members to 'participate without being assimilated'.⁶³

The StWC has allowed gender segregation on at least one occasion, when steering committee member Andrew Murray attended a rally in Yorkshire. The group's official history (written by Murray and German) says: *'The women present sat in a segregated area at the rear of the gymnasium, with screens which permitted them to see the stage, but not to be seen by men in the audience (the two or three non-Muslim women attending sat in the main body of the hall). [...]*

'Andrew mentioned to one of the organisers that he found this segregation uncomfortable. He was told that it was in fact progress – at the previous meeting women had not been allowed to attend at all, and the new, segregated set-up was a concession to the determination of Pakistani and Bengali British women to play a full part in the anti-war movement. What purpose would have been served by refusing to address such a meeting? Had Muslims been repelled from the anti-war movement, or had their participation been limited to those entirely at home with the culture and politics of the left, the process of

61 Ibid

62 Ibid

63 <http://rac.sagepub.com/content/50/2/101> (p. 103)

gradually addressing issues of social conservatism would probably never have been embarked upon'.⁶⁴

Here Murray and German argue that by attending gender segregated events they are empowering Muslim women. The idea that an alliance with the StWC will enlighten the MAB on such issues is a defence of the alliance the Coalition has often made.

Elsewhere in the book, Murray and German say that on the participation of women, the MAB's 'attitude seemed to take new shape as the movement progressed.' They admit that the 'leadership of MAB is entirely composed of men,' but add: '(other than the leadership of its women's section)'.⁶⁵

Responding to the charge that the MAB 'holds reactionary views on women's place in society,' Murray and German wrote that there is sexism and homophobia in the British trade union movement, and since this does not disqualify the trade unions from joining the anti-war movement, criticism of their alliance with the MAB 'indicate[s] a form of racism': *'Anyone remotely acquainted with the British trade union movement will be aware that neither sexism nor homophobia are uncommon in its ranks. [...] woman can be subjected to more crude sexist behaviour than they might be likely to encounter within the Muslim Association of Britain. No one would suggest that an anti-war movement should have no truck with trade unionism until its ranks are 100 percent cleansed of such behaviour. Yet this is good enough as a stick to beat Muslims. Such attitudes indicate a form of racism, a desire to hold their organisations at arms length for the flaws which are, in some measure, tolerable in ours*'.⁶⁶

Maryam Namazie, One Law for All's Spokesperson, said: 'The comparison is absurd. The difference of course is that the ethos of the trade union is not anti-woman, its ethos does not say that apostates should be killed or, as the head of the MAB said recently at a debate with myself, that women should be stoned to death. Its alliance with the MAB is akin to aligning with the English Defence League and then saying that racism exists in the ranks of the trade unions too so why single out the English!?' (See 'Postscript: Politics of Betrayal' at the end of this report.)

64 Murray, A. and German, L., *Stop the War: the story of Britain's biggest mass movement*, Bookmarks Publications, 2005, p. 62

65 Ibid, p. 88

66 Ibid

The StWC has also had Islamic prayers feature in at least one of their demonstrations. Murray and German write that at a 2001 protest in Trafalgar Square which took place during Ramadan, ‘an Imam made the call to prayer at the appropriate moment and, after a brief interlude, the rally resumed.’ They went on: *‘Of course, this might not please secular sectarians who would rather have a small rally than make any compromise to those feelings among the masses which they do not share. However, it was the right thing to do – it helped set in motion the alliance between the Muslim community and the left which has enriched both since’.*⁶⁷

The StWC has also defended the MAB on the charge of anti-Semitism. It said: *‘MAB leaders should be acquitted of the charge of anti-Semitism. MAB representatives never raised the slightest objection to Jewish speakers on our common platforms, or to the extensive and important Jewish participation in the movement more generally. Obviously, such objections would have been unacceptable to the StWC – but the issue never arose.’*

It has made a similar argument regarding the MAB’s sexism, saying that ‘there was never any suggestion by MAB that the participation of women in the movement should be restricted.’ Both defences set the bar very low for what constitutes sexism and anti-Semitism.

The StWC has confirmed that ‘there were occasionally complaints about slogans’ which ‘call for the expulsion of the Israelis’ and ‘the killing of Jews’ at their rallies, ‘but only from fringe groups and isolated individuals.’ It went on: ‘In so far as it was in our power to do so, the organisers of the movement confronted such behaviour and sought to exclude its practitioners from the marches.’

On anti-Semitism it said: *‘there can be no scope for complacency at any revival of this evil, or any concession to anti-Semitic conspiracy theories which, even if mouthed occasionally by young Muslims, are rooted in European Christian reaction’.*⁶⁸

Lindsey German addressed the subject of allying with homophobic Islamists in a debate in 2003. She said: *‘Now I’m in favour of defending gay rights, but I am not prepared to have it as a shibboleth, [created by] people who ... won’t*

67 Ibid, p. 82

68 Ibid

*defend George Galloway, and who regard the state of Israel as somehow a viable presence, justified in occupying Palestinian territories’.*⁶⁹

In December 2005 the new leadership of the MAB decided against anti-establishment political action following the 7 July bombings. A splinter group called the British Muslim Initiative was formed in February 2006 by the StWC’s contacts in the MAB.⁷⁰

These included Anas al-Tikriti as spokesperson⁷¹ and Mohammed Sawalha as president.⁷²

BMI spokesperson Ismail Patel⁷³ was a national member of the StWC’s steering committee in 2005⁷⁴ and subsequent years.⁷⁵ Patel wrote an article in praise of the leader of Hamas, Ismail Haniyeh, in 2007. He said: ‘Western leaders can neither match nor relate to Haniyah’s stature as a politician and a human being’.⁷⁶

Former MAB member Shamiul Joarder⁷⁷ is currently a national member of the StWC’s steering committee, representing the group Friends of Al-Aqsa,⁷⁸ which is chaired by Ismail Patel.⁷⁹

The BMI took over the role the MAB was playing in its relationship with the StWC. One source close to the BMI told the Institute of Race Relations: ‘*The brothers and sisters who were involved in the anti-war stuff went and set up BMI because they saw that relationship with the Left and Stop the War as unique, as something which needs to be nurtured and in fact needs to be spread globally as well as within the UK’.*⁸⁰

69 www.cpgb.org.uk/home/weekly-worker/488/marxism-2003-rees-lays-it-on-the-line

70 <http://rac.sagepub.com/content/50/2/101> (p. 107-109)

71 www.fairobserver.com/users/anas-altikriti

72 www.spittoon.org/archives/3116

73 www.guardian.co.uk/profile/ismailpatel

74 <http://web.archive.org/web/20050308112812/www.stopwar.org.uk/new/involved/aboutus/committee.htm>

75 Ibid

76 <http://conflictsforum.org/newsletterarchive/Issue12.pdf>

77 <http://rac.sagepub.com/content/50/2/101> (p. 106)

78 www.stopwar.org.uk/index.php/about/steering-committee-and-officers

79 www.guardian.co.uk/profile/ismailpatel

80 <http://rac.sagepub.com/content/50/2/101> (p. 107-109)

The case of Qaradawi

Yusuf al-Qaradawi is a leading Egyptian cleric. He has been described by the Muslim Brotherhood as its spiritual leader, and was offered the post of 'supreme guide' of the Muslim Brotherhood in 2004. Qaradawi declined the offer, saying he preferred not to be tied down by any group, 'even if this is the Muslim Brotherhood under whose umbrella I grew and which I so defended'.⁸¹

Yusuf al-Qaradawi has said that apostates from Islam should be killed adding: 'If they left apostasy alone, there wouldn't have been any Islam'.⁸²

He has expressed support for the murder of homosexuals 'to maintain the purity of the Islamic society and to keep it clean of perverted elements'.⁸³

Qaradawi has said that Muslim women must be forced to wear a hijab: *'It is unanimously agreed upon among Muslim scholars that it is not lawful for a Muslim woman to uncover any part of her body other than the face and hands (and the feet according to some schools of jurisprudence). Hence, it is unlawful for a woman to reveal her hair, or arms, or chest or legs before non-mahram men. Wearing clothes that reveal such parts of a woman's body is completely forbidden. A Muslim husband is to order his wife to wear hijab'*.⁸⁴

He has also said that men can beat their wives if they cannot pacify them by other means. He said: *'If the husband senses that feelings of disobedience and rebelliousness are rising against him in his wife, he should try his best to rectify her attitude by kind words, gentle persuasion, and reasoning with her. If this is not helpful, he should sleep apart from her, trying to awaken her agreeable feminine nature so that serenity may be restored and she may respond to him in a harmonious fashion. If this approach fails, it is permissible for him to admonish her lightly with his hands, avoiding her face and other sensitive areas'*.⁸⁵

81 www.aljazeera.com/archive/2004/01/2008410145045889729.html

82 Ibid

83 www.leftfootforward.org/2010/09/livingstone-al-qaradawi-is-a-leading-progressive-voice-in-muslim-world/

84 www.workersliberty.org/node/4068

85 Ibid

Qaradawi supports female genital mutilation. He said: 'whoever finds it serving the interest of his daughters should do it, and I personally support this under the current circumstances in the modern world'.⁸⁶

In 2001, he expressed support for killing Israeli civilians, be they male or female.⁸⁷

In a public speech in 2009 he said that Adolph Hitler had been sent by Allah to punish Jewish people and 'put them in their place'.⁸⁸ He said that although the Jews 'exaggerated' what Hitler did to them, it was 'divine punishment'.⁸⁹

He boycotted an interfaith dialogue conference in April 2013 in Qatar saying: 'As the conference was expanded to become Muslim, Christian and Jewish, I decided not to attend in order not to sit with Jews on one stage'.⁹⁰

Qaradawi was hosted by the Muslim Association of Britain in London in January 2003. The MAB said: '*MAB was honoured to host arguably the world's greatest living scholar, and presented to the British media and the Muslim public at this critical time is global politics*'.⁹¹

Their event was jointly hosted by the Islamic Forum of Europe, which is discussed later in this report. The MAB's website said Qaradawi endorsed their demonstration with the StWC, which was to take place on 15 February.⁹²

Qaradawi was invited to London the following year by the Muslim Association of Britain in order to promote his European Council for Fatwa and Research.⁹³ He was welcomed and physically embraced by the Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone, at City Hall.⁹⁴

A coalition of campaigners and community groups of various ethnic, religious and political backgrounds criticized the red carpet treatment Qaradawi was

86 Ibid

87 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/3874893.stm>

88 www.memritv.org/clip_transcript/en/2005.htm (Video available here: www.memritv.org/clip/en/2005.htm)

89 Ibid

90 www.middleeastmonitor.com/news/middle-east/5870-sheikh-yusuf-al-qaradawi-to-visit-gaza-next-month

91 <http://web.archive.org/web/20030609042045/http://www.mabonline.net/news/articles/qardawioniraq27.01.03.htm>

92 Ibid

93 http://www.hudson.org/files/publications/Current_Trends_Islamist_Ideology_v2.pdf

94 www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1498358/Radical-imam-like-pope-says-mayor.html

receiving. They presented the Mayor with a dossier on who Qaradawi was which summarized his views. The Mayor refused to meet with them,⁹⁵ and instead published a dossier of his own defending Qaradawi and attacking his critics.⁹⁶ (Ken Livingstone's role in the Qaradawi case is discussed later in this report.)

Human rights campaigner Peter Tatchell said Qaradawi is 'a reactionary fundamentalist cleric who provides theological justification for the denial of human rights to millions of Muslims living under Islamic rule'.⁹⁷

OutRage! campaigner Ramzi Isalam, a gay Muslim who came to Britain to avoid being killed by Islamists in Algeria, said Qaradawi is 'a cleric who provides theological justification for the homophobia of the people who wanted to kill me.' He asked: '*Why is the mayor prepared to have a dialogue with fundamentalists like Dr Qaradawi and the Muslim Association of Britain, but not with liberal and progressive Muslims and not with the victims of Islamist repression and dictatorship?*'⁹⁸

The Muslim Association of Britain defended its invitation to Qaradawi, describing him as 'the most renowned and authoritative scholar in the Muslim world today'.⁹⁹

It said there was a 'concerted and evil effort from the pro-Zionist lobby to vilify Islam and Muslims [which] began when Sheikh Yusuf Al-Qaradawi came to London in early July on a visit hosted by the Muslim Association of Britain.'

MAB spokesperson Sohaib Saeed called criticism of Qaradawi 'an attack on all Muslims.' He said: '*Mr Qaradawi's rulings are recognised by Muslims around the world as reflecting the balanced nature of Islamic law and its relevance to modern life. [...] Statements attributed to him are consistently misquoted or quoted out of context to misrepresent his arguments*'.¹⁰⁰

In a later statement he said: 'Yusuf al-Qaradawi is considered by Muslims to be among the most eminent of scholars, deriving Islamic rulings to meet modern questions. [...] Anyone who knows the Muslim world realizes Dr Qaradawi's positive influence.'

95 www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2004/nov/11/london.religion?INTCMP=SRCH

96 http://static.london.gov.uk/news/docs/qaradawi_dossier.pdf

97 www.petertatchell.net/religion/qaradawidossier.htm

98 www.guardian.co.uk/world/2004/nov/15/gayrights.guardianletters?INTCMP=SRCH

99 www.ihr.org.uk/show.php?id=1216

100 www.guardian.co.uk/world/2004/jul/09/religion.politics?INTCMP=ILCNETTXT3487

Anas al-Tikriti said: 'The continuing highlighting of falsehoods and misinterpretations attributed to the Sheikh is hugely damaging to everyone'.¹⁰¹

He said the attacks on Qaradawi were part of a wider trend of Islamophobia: *'Sheikh al-Qaradawi's recent visit to Britain would have been a useful chance to discuss how to promote common understanding. [...] Instead, the right within politics and the media worked tirelessly to scupper this opportunity and to demonise hundreds of thousands of British Muslims who adhere to their faith and hold the likes of al-Qaradawi in high regard.'*

He concluded by saying that 'the right's attempts to smear and demonize those who strive for justice, openness and the building of bridges of friendship' could increase the number of Muslims supportive of jihad.¹⁰²

MAB spokesperson Osama Saeed said there was 'a rightwing smear campaign against such eminent scholars as Sheikh al-Qaradawi – a man who has worked hard to reconcile Islam with modern democracy. Such actions and omissions fuel the suspicion that we are witnessing a war on Islam itself'.¹⁰³

Andrew Murray and Lindsey German of the StWC have written that attacks on Yusuf al-Qaradawi are part of a rise in racism and anti-Muslim sentiment. They pledged to defend the Muslim Association of Britain and Muslims from such attacks in a way that implied the two were synonymous.¹⁰⁴

101 www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2004/nov/11/london.religion?INTCMP=SRCH

102 www.guardian.co.uk/world/2004/aug/05/islam.religion?INTCMP=SRCH

103 www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2005/jul/23/july7.uk

104 Murray, A. and German, L., *Stop the War: the story of Britain's biggest mass movement*, Bookmarks Publications, 2005, p. 268

The Respect Party

The Respect Party was formed in January 2004. Co-founder and prominent StWC activist George Galloway said: 'It is an attempt to grow out of the anti-war movement a new political force against war and the causes of war.'

Respect shared much of its leadership with the StWC, including leaders of the Muslim Association of Britain. Galloway said: *'In most places the activists of Respect are the same people who made the anti-war movement such a huge force. Many of the leaders of the one are also the leaders of the other: John Rees, Lindsey German, Anas Al-Tikriti and Dr Azzam Tamimi of the Muslim Association of Britain [...]*

*Sometimes it's difficult to know, looking at a platform, whether it is a Respect meeting or a gathering of the anti-war movement. Sometimes I'm on the platform and have to ask the others, "Which of the two are we speaking for tonight?"*¹⁰⁵

This desire to take electoral advantage of the anti-war movement is enshrined in Respect's founding statement. It said: 'The greatest mass movement of our age has brought us together. We have marched in unprecedented numbers against war, against racism, and in defence of democracy and civil liberties. Our views are shared by millions, often a majority of the people in this country. Yet no establishment politician, and very few elected representatives of any kind, will lend their voice to this movement'.¹⁰⁶

The Socialist Workers Party was very involved in the party from the start, (as it was with the StWC),¹⁰⁷ to the extent that there were fears the SWP might take it over.¹⁰⁸

Respect leader George Galloway said that 2004's election would be 'a referendum on the war.' He said he had a good chance of winning a European Parliament seat in London: 'When I look at the anti-war opinion in London, at all the different communities in London, I think it is eminently possible to garner 86,700 votes'.¹⁰⁹

105 Galloway, G., *I'm Not The Only One*, Allen Lane, 2004, p. 161

106 <http://web.archive.org/web/20100315171607/www.therespectparty.net/founding.php>

107 www.isj.org.uk/index.php4?id=396

108 www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2004/jan/23/iraq.iraq

109 www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2004/may/20/elections2004.iraq

Anas al-Tikriti, spokesperson for the Muslim Association of Britain and later the British Muslim Initiative, formally joined Respect in 2004. He stood as the party's leading candidate in Yorkshire and Humberside in the European Parliamentary elections,¹¹⁰ in which the party received 1.5% of the national vote.¹¹¹

Lindsey German, convener of the StWC, was Respect's candidate for London Mayor in 2004.¹¹²

She came in fifth, well below UKIP and just above the BNP.¹¹³

Her fellow Socialist Workers Party member John Rees also ran for Respect as European candidate in the West Midlands,¹¹⁴ and was for a time its national secretary.¹¹⁵

Respect has received funding from the Socialist Workers Party. According to the electoral commission, the SWP gave Respect a total of £13,842 in 2006.¹¹⁶

Respect won its first seat in parliament in 2005 when George Galloway, who is discussed in more detail later in this report, became MP for Bethnal Green and Bow. His campaign was powered by a group called the Islamic Forum of Europe (IFE), which became the engine of the Respect party from then on. A month after the election Galloway addressed a dinner at the East London mosque complex and thanked the IFE for campaigning for him: *'I am indebted more than I can say, more than it would be wise for them for me to say, to the Islamic Forum of Europe. I believe they played the decisive role, undoubtedly decisive in this historic victory'*.¹¹⁷

110 www.guardian.co.uk/global/2007/jun/03/resource2

111 http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/election_2010/8592756.stm

112 Ibid

113 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/bsp/hi/vote2004/london/html/front.stm>

114 www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2004/may/20/elections2004.iraq

115 www.isj.org.uk/?id=396

116 <https://pefonline.electoralcommission.org.uk/search/searchintro.aspx>

117 <http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/andrewgilligan/100060409/britains-islamic-republic-full-transcript-of-channel-4-dispatches-programme-on-lutfur-rahman-the-ife-and-tower-hamlets-the-full-transcript/>

What is the Islamic Forum of Europe?

The Islamic Forum of Europe is in effect an arm of Jamaat-e-Islami, a Far-Right Islamist organisation based in Pakistan and Bangladesh. It operates out of the East London Mosque complex, which has been described as ‘the key institution for the Bangladeshi wing of Jamaat-e-Islami in the UK’ by the Department of Communities and Local Government.¹¹⁸

It has also shared many of the Mosque’s senior trustees and staff.¹¹⁹

The Islamic Forum of Europe was co-founded by Chowdhury Mueen-Uddin, a Jamaat-e-Islami member wanted in Bangladesh for committing war crimes during the war for independence in 1971. These include the abduction, torture and killing of citizens deemed subversive. While Mueen-Uddin denies the charges, the International Crimes Tribunal says it has eye witness testimony regarding his actions. In April 2012 the chief investigator said: ‘There is prima facie evidence of Chowdhury Mueen-Uddin being involved in a series of killings of intellectuals’.¹²⁰

Mueen-Uddin was vice chairman of the East London Mosque and London Muslim Centre until 2010 and helped set up the Muslim Council of Britain¹²¹. In 1989 he was a key leader of the protests in London against Salman Rushdie’s book *The Satanic Verses*.¹²²

A Channel 4 Dispatches investigation revealed that the IFE supports Jamaat-e-Islami policies and works to re-establish the Islamic caliphate. It quoted IFE literature which said: ‘*In order to do its utmost to please Allah and Allah alone, the Islamic Forum Europe strives for the establishment of a global society, the Khalifah [...] comprised of individuals who live by the principals of the eternal code of life, the Shariah.*’

118 <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20120919132719/http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/1170952.pdf> (p. 40)

119 <http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/andrewgilligan/100060409/britains-islamic-republic-full-transcript-of-channel-4-dispatches-programme-on-lutfur-rahman-the-ife-and-tower-hamlets-the-full-transcript/>

120 www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/bangladesh/9204831/Leading-British-Muslim-leader-faces-war-crimes-charges-in-Bangladesh.html

121 www.chowdhurymueenuddin.com/

122 www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/bangladesh/9204831/Leading-British-Muslim-leader-faces-war-crimes-charges-in-Bangladesh.html

The IFE documents said this will involve changing ‘the very infrastructure of society, its institutions, its culture, its political order, and its creed, from ignorance to Islam.’ The Dispatches investigation said the IFE is a highly structured political movement. Members take formal training courses with reading lists, sit exams, take an oath of allegiance, and a pledge of secrecy. IFE reading lists include books by Abdul Ala Maududi, the founder of Jamat-e-Islami, which are used to teach his brand of Islamism in its classes. Female members of the IFE wait to be instructed by its men on the group’s activities, and its meetings are segregated, with women hidden behind a screen.¹²³

In 2003 the IFE invited al-Qaeda recruiter Anwar al-Awlaki¹²⁴ to speak at one of its events,¹²⁵ at a time when he was wanted for questioning over his involvement with the 9/11 attackers.¹²⁶

In 2008 the IFE’s community affairs co-ordinator, Azad Ali, said Awlaki was one of his favourite speakers and scholars.¹²⁷ (Azad Ali is discussed in the Unite Against Fascism section of this report.)

The IFE has been able to infiltrate Respect and the Labour Party in Tower Hamlets and secure government positions for its sympathisers.¹²⁸

Abjol Miah, as senior activist for the IFE, campaigned for George Galloway in 2005¹²⁹ and was later a candidate for Respect.¹³⁰ He told an undercover

123 <http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/andrewgilligan/100060409/britains-islamic-republic-full-transcript-of-channel-4-dispatches-programme-on-lutfur-rahman-the-ife-and-tower-hamlets-the-full-transcript/>

124 <http://icsr.info/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/1315827595ICSRPaperAsAmericanAsApplePieHowAnwaralAwlakiBecameTheFaceofWesternJihad.pdf> (Appendix, p. 83-90)

125 <http://henryjacksonsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/anwar.pdf> (p. 10)

126 www.currenttrends.org/research/detail/the-making-of-the-christmas-day-bomber

127 <http://henryjacksonsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/anwar.pdf> (p. 12)

128 <http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/andrewgilligan/100060409/britains-islamic-republic-full-transcript-of-channel-4-dispatches-programme-on-lutfur-rahman-the-ife-and-tower-hamlets-the-full-transcript/>

129 <http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/andrewgilligan/100058658/fundamentalist-liar-loses-another-complaint-against-us/>

130 www.electionleaflets.org/leaflets/2136

Dispatches reporter: 'We've actually consolidated ourselves now. We've got a lot of influence and power in the councils. Councillors, politicians'.¹³¹

Miah organised a petition which helped introduce the role of directly elected Mayor in Tower Hamlets.¹³² He then campaigned in the mayoral election for Lutfur Rahman,¹³³ an IFE sympathiser and funder whom the IFE had helped become a Labour councillor. Rahman was dropped as Labour candidate over his links with the IFE and his failure to declare large donations. He ran instead as an independent and won, becoming Mayor of Tower Hamlets in October 2010,¹³⁴ in an election with a turnout of 25.6%.¹³⁵

A free newspaper was circulated during the campaign which claimed Helal Abbas, the Labour party candidate, was a wife-beater and an enemy of Islam.¹³⁶ Lutfur Rahman's campaign to become Mayor of Tower Hamlets was supported by the Respect Party, both before and after he was dropped by Labour.¹³⁷

In a statement Respect said: *'Tower Hamlets Respect Party has decided by an overwhelming majority not to stand a candidate in the mayoral election. Instead Tower Hamlets Respect calls on all its members, supporters and voters to vote for Lutfur Rahman to be Tower Hamlets first executive mayor.'*

It said Respect played a crucial role in introducing the new post of directly elected Mayor in Tower Hamlets. The Respect Party also said criticism of Rahman was 'a vicious witch-hunt orchestrated within the Labour party and fuelled from without by the extreme right wing press [...] This has demonised both Lutfur

131 <http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/andrewgilligan/100060409/britains-islamic-republic-full-transcript-of-channel-4-dispatches-programme-on-lutfur-rahman-the-ife-and-tower-hamlets-the-full-transcript/>

132 www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/7386900/Islamists-got-voters-out-for-Livingstone.html

133 www.eastlondonadvertiser.co.uk/news/tower_hamlets_mayoral_campaign_why_respect_s_abjol_miah_backs_lutfur_rahman_1_660332

134 <http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/andrewgilligan/100112318/lutfur-rahman-all-his-controversies-in-one-place/>

135 <http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/andrewgilligan/100060304/labour-london-borough-becomes-islamic-republic/>

136 <http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/andrewgilligan/100059168/lutfur-rahman-the-most-extraordinary-election-propaganda-i-have-ever-seen/>

137 www.eastlondonadvertiser.co.uk/news/tower_hamlets_mayoral_campaign_why_respect_s_abjol_miah_backs_lutfur_rahman_1_660332

and significant sections of the Muslim community with a thinly veiled anti-Muslim racism'.¹³⁸

The Respect Party 'Shadow Cabinet'

The Respect Party's alliance with Islamism is further evidenced by the people who make up what could be called its 'shadow cabinet'.

Yvonne Ridley

Yvonne Ridley is a prominent StWC activist and founding member of Respect. She helped launch the party in 2004 by campaigning alongside George Galloway and Lindsey German.¹³⁹

Ridley stood that year as a Respect candidate in the European elections and for a by-election in Leicester South. She was also Respect candidate for the 2005 general election, a Westminster council election in 2006¹⁴⁰ and a Rotherham by-election in 2012.¹⁴¹ Ridley spoke at a Respect party rally in 2012 with George Galloway as part of his by-election campaign in Bradford West.¹⁴²

Yvonne Ridley began speaking at StWC events in late 2002,¹⁴³ having been captured by the Taliban the previous year while covering the Afghanistan war for the Sunday Express. She was released a few weeks later and said the Taliban treated her 'with kindness and respect'.¹⁴⁴ Ridley said she had promised her captors she would read the Quran, and in 2003 she converted to Islam.¹⁴⁵

She has since become an active promoter of Islamism through politics, articles, television broadcasts and lectures. In 2008 she told the Guardian that thousands had heard her speak, from Kerala to Tanzania. She said: *'I'm a motivational*

138 <http://web.archive.org/web/20101129024821/www.therespectparty.net/breakingnews.php?id=905>

139 www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2004/may/20/elections2004.iraq

140 www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/2008/jul/06/women.features4

141 www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-south-yorkshire-20289025

142 www.youtube.com/watch?v=zIXujsrAGog

143 Murray, A. and German, L., *Stop the War: the story of Britain's biggest mass movement*, Bookmarks Publications, 2005, p. 64

144 www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2004/feb/24/pressandpublishing.afghanistan

145 www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/2008/jul/06/women.features4

speaker. I'm reinforcing their beliefs, I'm attacking the War on Terror, which is a war on Islam, and I'm defending the resistance in the Muslim world'.¹⁴⁶

Ridley also said she had been voted 'most recognisable woman in the Islamic world' by Yusuf al-Qaradawi's *Islam Online* website. In the same interview she refused to condemn the 7/7 bombings in London, and likened 'the tactics of suicide bombers elsewhere to those used by the ANC in South Africa and by the International Brigades in Spain'.¹⁴⁷

Yvonne Ridley hosted a programme called *The Agenda* on Press TV, the English-language propaganda station of the Islamic Regime of Iran.¹⁴⁸ She has written articles for the channel's website as recently as January 2013.¹⁴⁹ When the channel was launched in 2007, (reporting on its website that the 7/7 bombings were 'staged by the UK government in order to tarnish British Muslims enraged by the knighting of Salman Rushdie'), Ridley said: '*I see it as an antidote to Fox TV that will give a different perspective to the coverage that you get from the mainstream media. It's not shock TV, tabloid TV or propaganda promoting reactionaryism. [...] I have had no editorial interference so far and I wouldn't be here if someone did try to censor me. I like working for news outlets that don't peddle propaganda.*'

Press TV was launched that year by Mahmoud Ahmadinejad at the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting headquarters. He said: 'We scarcely know a media that does its duty correctly. Our media should be a standard bearer of peace and stability'.¹⁵⁰

In 2011 Ofcom found that the channel had broadcast a forced confession by Newsweek journalist Maziar Bahari, while he was held in an Iranian jail. Bahari had been arrested during the state violence that followed the Iranian protests in 2009.¹⁵¹

Press TV interviewed him on camera in Evin prison while his 'interrogator' suggested questions and hid behind a curtain. A spokesperson for Index on Censorship said: '*The way Press TV behaved, by going into the prison and*

146 Ibid

147 Ibid

148 www.presstv.ir/section/3510509.html

149 www.presstv.ir/detail/2013/01/19/284418/algerians-want-aafia-siddiqui-released/

150 www.guardian.co.uk/media/2007/jul/03/iran.television

151 www.guardian.co.uk/media/2011/may/23/iran-press-tv-maziar-bahari

essentially colluding with the torture and illegal detention of a journalist - that should finish their reputation once and for all in this country'.¹⁵²

Press TV has also broadcast a forced confession by Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani, the victim in the Iranian 'stoning case'.¹⁵³

Moreover, Press TV broadcast a report saying the video of the death of Neda Agha-Soltan, who was shot during the 2009 protests by government forces, had been staged as part of a plot against the government.¹⁵⁴

The channel has also published holocaust denial on its website,¹⁵⁵ along with conspiracy theories about the influence of Zionists, freemasons and the 'Illuminati' on the 2012 Olympic Games.¹⁵⁶

Press TV's licence was revoked by Ofcom in 2012 for its refusal to pay a £100,000 fine for the Bahari case, and for its refusal to move editorial control of the station from Iran to the UK.¹⁵⁷ Yvonne Ridley said this was an act of censorship by the British government and denied that the channel is a mouthpiece of the Iranian regime. She dismissed its treatment of Maziar Bahari and likened the channel to the BBC. She said: *'Press TV is state-funded but it's not state-controlled. [...] It is not a mouthpiece for the Iranian government'*.¹⁵⁸

In 2009 Ridley wrote an article on the elections in Iran in which she criticized the western media's coverage of the election and of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. She said:

'He's certainly popular with millions of voters across Iran but despised by the corporate Western media. Despite my efforts, I could not find one single mainstream newspaper which covered the Iranian elections in an objective way.'

Ridley suggested that the protests in Tehran had been organised by the CIA and 'other mischief makers.' She also said she was a 'fan' of Ahmadinejad: 'At

152 www.channel4.com/news/iran-reporters-ofcom-complaint-over-tv-confession

153 <http://freethoughtblogs.com/maryamnamazie/2011/07/17/sakineh-mohammadi-ashtiani-is-given-leave-from-prison-to-bid-her-mother-farewell/>

154 <http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/babylonbeyond/2010/01/iran-state-tv-airs-documentary-alleging-neda-gha-soltans-death-staged.html>

155 <http://edition.presstv.ir/detail/56287.html>

156 www.presstv.ir/detail/255920.html

157 www.guardian.co.uk/media/2012/jan/20/iran-press-tv-loses-uk-licence

158 http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/today/newsid_9683000/9683030.stm

this point I should declare my own personal interest which stems from the fact that I present a political current affairs show called The Agenda for the Iranian-broadcaster Press TV which is owned by state-run television IRIB.

'My other interest stems from the fact I'm quite a fan of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad who is adored by the common man and woman in Iran. Anyone who vows to narrow the gap between rich and poor can't be all that bad... unless you're one of the rich!'¹⁵⁹

Later that year, Ridley spoke at an 'al-Quds day' event alongside the Muslim Association of Britain's Azzam Tamimi¹⁶⁰. She said that Ayatollah Khomeini imposed sanctions on Israel and South Africa, and that 'drinking Coca-Cola is like drinking the blood of Palestinian children'.¹⁶¹

Yvonne Ridley has also hosted a version of *The Agenda* on the Islam Channel, which a 2007 Ofcom report said had breached the Broadcasting Code by promoting the Respect Party and allowing candidates like Ridley to host programmes during an election.¹⁶²

Ridley wrote an article in 2005 in which she tried to justify al-Qaeda's bombing of hotels in Amman, Jordan, in which 60 people were killed and 100 injured.¹⁶³ She defended the perpetrator, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who was then the leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq, after his family disowned him. She said: 'I think I'd rather put up with a brother like Abu Musab al-Zarqawi any day than have a traitor or sell-out for a father, son or grandfather'.¹⁶⁴

Yvonne Ridley also wrote an elegy to Shamil Basayev in which she called him a shaheed (martyr). Basayev organised a number of terrorist attacks in Russia including the 2004 siege of Beslan school, which resulted in the deaths of 300 people, mostly children.¹⁶⁵ Ridley said: '*Basaev led an admirable fight to bring independence to Chechnya and resorted to targeting Russian civilians in the*

159 www.thecanadiancharger.com/page.php?id=5&a=41

160 Tamimi video: www.youtube.com/watch?v=kSvckZZQfTQ&feature=related

161 Ridley video: www.youtube.com/watch?v=na5KLaj7LRg&feature=player_embedded

162 <http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/enforcement/content-sanctions-adjudications/islamchannel.pdf>

163 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/4423714.stm>

164 www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/1529185/posts

165 www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/russians-claim-killing-of-rebel-basayev-the-beslan-butcher-407462.html

latter years of his struggle to try and bring the plight of the Chechen people to the wider world'.¹⁶⁶

In a speech in 2007 Ridley said there is a war on Islam to make it secular and cultural, and remove from it the concepts of sharia, jihad and the caliphate. She said: *'Since 9/11, there has been an unrelenting campaign launched to change Islam into something more palatable to Western society. The vision is secular and cultural Islam at peace with the world through her submission to her oppressors rather than to Allah; an Islam devoid of jihad, shari'ah and khilafah – the very things we are commanded by Allah to implement in order to establish Allah's deen on this earth.'*

She said that Muslims who 'criticize Islamist parties and governance by shari'ah' are 'the new slaves of the West.' Ridley concluded by saying that Muslims would need to fight to protect the true version of their faith. She said: *'The more we are told to forget shari'ah, khilafah and jihad, the more Muslims will pay the blood price to uphold these values'.¹⁶⁷*

Salma Yaqoob

Salma Yaqoob helped found the Respect Party in 2004¹⁶⁸ and has been its leader since it was formed.¹⁶⁹ She became a councilor in Birmingham for Respect in 2006. Yaqoob is also chair of the StWC in Birmingham¹⁷⁰ and a national member of its steering committee.¹⁷¹ Yaqoob resigned as leader of Respect in September 2012 after George Galloway said the allegations of rape made about Julian Assange, head of Wikileaks, were merely 'bad sexual etiquette.' In a statement she said: 'I remain committed to the principles and values that led me to help found Respect'.¹⁷²

Salma Yaqoob has also been spokesperson for Birmingham Central Mosque, whose chairman, Mohammad Naseem,¹⁷³ has given £15,457 to the Respect party.¹⁷⁴

166 www.kavkazcenter.com/eng/content/2006/07/18/5002.shtml

167 www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=944

168 www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2012/sep/12/salma-yaqoob-quits-respect-leader

169 www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2012/dec/07/respect-party-loses-second-leader

170 http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/election_2010/8592756.stm

171 www.stopwar.org.uk/index.php/about/steering-committee-and-officers

172 www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2012/sep/12/salma-yaqoob-quits-respect-leader

173 www.centralmosque.org.uk/1/about-us/personnel

174 <https://pefonline.electoralcommission.org.uk/search/searchintro.aspx>

In June 2004 a newsletter from the mosque written by Yaqoob advised Muslims to vote for Respect in the upcoming elections. It placed Respect Party literature next to religious instruction and quotes from the Quran. It also featured StWC material about the war in Iraq.¹⁷⁵

This and other newsletters from the mosque contain adverts for meetings of the Respect Party and the StWC. One offers a coach service from the mosque to a StWC demonstration.¹⁷⁶

Another newsletter features a cover article by Yaqoob, in which she uses quotes from the Quran to suggest that Muslims should become StWC activists. The religious content in the newsletters is of a very conservative nature, featuring advice on how to dress modestly and resist 'Satan's influence', with reference to the story of Adam and Eve.¹⁷⁷

Mohammad Naseem stood as a Respect party candidate in Birmingham in the 2005 general election.¹⁷⁸ He is also an executive member and spokesperson of the Islamic Party of Britain,¹⁷⁹ which has said, a 'public display' of homosexuality should be punishable by death.¹⁸⁰

Peter Tatchell said: *'Proof of the homophobic rot at the heart of Respect is the party's open embrace of people and organisations that support the death penalty for homosexuality. Respect not only takes money from people involved in far right Islamist groups that want to ban gay organisations and kill lesbians and gays, it puts these people on its national council and makes them parliamentary candidates. [...] Instead of allying with fundamentalists, Respect should be linking up with liberal, progressive Muslims, and defending Muslims who are victimised by the fundamentalists'*.¹⁸¹

Salma Yaqoob said the 7/7 bombings were 'reprisal events' at a public debate in 2007 organised by the Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone, who took part in the

175 <http://web.archive.org/web/20111202185344/http://centralmosque.org.uk/PDF-downloads/200406-On%20The%20Eve%20of%20Election.pdf>

176 <http://web.archive.org/web/20101214181113/http://centralmosque.org.uk/PDF-downloads/200403-Hijab%20-%20A%20Beautiful%20Liberation.pdf>

177 <http://web.archive.org/web/20101214182015/http://centralmosque.org.uk/PDF-downloads/200404-Why%20The%20Person%20Is%20Political%20In%20Islam.pdf>

178 www.petertatchell.net/politics/cashforpower.htm

179 <http://mustaqim.co.uk/ipb-archive/people/muhammad.htm>

180 <http://mustaqim.co.uk/ipb-archive/question/ans41.htm>

181 www.petertatchell.net/politics/cashforpower.htm

debate on her side.¹⁸² She defended her characterisation of the bombings online on their fifth anniversary.¹⁸³

Yaqoob has hosted a programme called *Media and Politics* on the Islam Channel. As mentioned above, a 2007 Ofcom report said the Islam Channel had breached the Broadcasting Code by promoting the Respect party and allowing its candidates to host programmes during an election.¹⁸⁴

The channel has given airtime to a number of Islamists, often in the role of presenter, including members of the group Hizb ut-Tahrir, who have produced programmes.¹⁸⁵ Anas al-Tirkiti of the Muslim Association of Britain has hosted a programme, while Ismail Patel of the British Muslim Initiative has appeared as a regular guest.¹⁸⁶

A separate report by the Quilliam foundation monitored the channel and found that most of the non-Muslim guests on *Media and Politics* while Yaqoob was host were members of the Respect party or the StWC.¹⁸⁷

Salma Yaqoob's replacement as leader of Respect, Arshad Ali, stepped down in December 2012 after it emerged he had a spent conviction for electoral fraud. Ali stood in elections for the Respect party in 2007 and 2010.¹⁸⁸

* * *

The Respect Party split in 2007 between supporters of George Galloway and members of the Socialist Workers Party.¹⁸⁹ However, in 2012 the SWP publically welcomed Galloway's victory in Bradford west. In a statement it said: *'Respect had a vibrant campaign that involved many people new to political activity. Galloway pulled together a vote overwhelmingly of working class people and enthused big numbers of young people. The SWP congratulates George*

182 www.youtube.com/watch?v=TrVHlKAajMw

183 www.salmayaqoob.com/2010/07/remember-77.html#more

184 <http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/enforcement/content-sanctions-adjudications/islamchannel.pdf>

185 www.quilliamfoundation.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/publications/free/re-programming-british-muslims.pdf (p. 65-73)

186 *Ibid* (p. 85, 102)

187 *Ibid* (p. 85, 102)

188 www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2012/dec/07/respect-party-loses-second-leader

189 http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/election_2010/8592756.stm

Galloway on his success and hopes he will take a lead in the continuing battle against austerity, racism and imperialism.¹⁹⁰

The case of George Galloway

George Galloway is probably the best known leader of the StWC, which he co-founded in 2001.¹⁹¹ He is currently a vice chairman of the group¹⁹² and has spoken at its events as recently as 2012.¹⁹³ Despite his on-off relationship with the Socialist Workers Party, he was invited to speak at its Marxism 2012 event.¹⁹⁴

Galloway founded the Respect party in 2004 and is its only candidate to have been elected as a member of parliament.¹⁹⁵

As has been mentioned above, George Galloway became MP for Bethnal Green and Bow in 2005 with the help of the Islamic Forum of Europe, which he thanked at its headquarters soon after the election. (See 'The Respect Party' section of this report.) He and his party have also benefitted from an alliance with the Muslim Association of Britain.

During the IFE-backed campaign in 2005 Galloway's opponent and Labour candidate, Oona King, had her car tyres slashed and was pelted with eggs.¹⁹⁶ She said: *'I was fairly shocked by the levels to which it sank. The thing that I am proudest of in this country is that we have a political system where political intimidation doesn't exist. That, actually, for the first time came to the fore in Bethnal Green and Bow, and I think people around the country should be worried about it. [...]*

'The fact that my mother was Jewish came up all of the time in quite a disturbing way. As a kid it was "Oi, you nigger", "you wog" and all the rest of it, and now it was "yids", "you Jewish bitch, get out of here", all of that sort of stuff.'

190 <http://web.archive.org/web/20120706060145/http://www.swp.org.uk/statement/galloway-election-victory>

191 Murray, A. and German, L., *Stop the War: the story of Britain's biggest mass movement*, Bookmarks Publications, 2005, p. 47-48. p. 266-267

192 www.stopwar.org.uk/index.php/about/steering-committee-and-officers

193 www.respectparty.org/2012/02/dontattackiran.html

194 www.marxismfestival.org.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=46&Itemid=71

195 Galloway, G., *I'm Not The Only One*, Allen Lane, 2004, p. 150

196 www.guardian.co.uk/world/2005/apr/17/religion.otherparties

King was also accused of wanting to get rid of Halal meat. Galloway had been using racial politics and King's support for the Iraq war as part of his campaign.¹⁹⁷ When asked 'how he felt standing against one of only two black women MPs,' he said King had 'voted to kill a lot of women in the last few years; many of them had much darker skins than her'.¹⁹⁸

Galloway was asked on the BBC after the election about the nature of his campaign. He said the interviewer was insulting his constituents and walked off the set. David Lammy, a Labour MP, said: 'the manner in which he won that seat, whipping up racial tension, dividing some of the poorest people in this country, I think was obscene'.¹⁹⁹

George Galloway also benefited from his alliance with Islamists during his 2012 election campaign in Bradford West. Abjol Miah and the Islamic Forum of Europe were involved in his campaign. It was suggested that Galloway's Labour opponent, Imran Hussain, was not a proper Muslim. Galloway also implied that he himself was a Muslim. Leaflets were circulated which said: '*God KNOWS who is a Muslim. And he KNOWS who is not. [...] Let me point out to all the Muslim brothers and sisters what I stand for. I, George Galloway, do not drink alcohol and never have. Ask yourself if the other candidate in this election can say that truthfully. I, George Galloway, have fought for the Muslims at home and abroad, all my life, and paid a price for it. I, George Galloway, hold Pakistan's highest civil awards.*'

Galloway also gave a speech at an official campaign rally in which he said: 'I'm a better Pakistani than he [Hussain] will ever be. God knows who's a Muslim and who is not. And a man that's never out of the pub shouldn't be going around telling people you should vote for him because he's a Muslim. A Muslim is ready to go to the US Senate, as I did, and to their face call them murderers, liars, thieves and criminals. A Muslim is somebody who's not afraid of earthly power but who fears only the Judgment Day. I'm ready for that, I'm working for that and it's the only thing I fear'.²⁰⁰

Galloway also used the threat of hellfire to encourage Muslims to vote for him. At a campaign rally he said: '*I believe in the Judgment Day. All of you do. I*

197 http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/4535885.stm

198 http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/vote_2005/blog/4519553.stm

199 Ibid

200 www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/9176195/A-runaway-victory-for-George-Galloway-and-all-praise-to-Allah.html

believe that one day we will have to answer to the Almighty, for what we did, and what we did not do, with the life that God gave us. And I just say this, and I ask you to say it, especially to other religious people: how will you explain, on the last day, that you had a chance, on 29 March, 2012, to vote either for the guy who led the great campaign against the slaughter of millions of people in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere, you could have voted for him, but instead you voted, because of village politics, you voted for a party that's killed a million Iraqis, which has killed a hundred thousand Afghans, which has supported Israel killing uncountable numbers of Palestinians. How are you going to explain that one? You had a choice. Not the normal choice. Not Labour or Tory. Not Labour or Tory or Liberal. You had a choice of voting for the leading opponent of these crimes, against these crimes, but you chose instead to reward the party that committed these crimes. How are you going to explain that on the Judgement Day?'²⁰¹

Islamism

Galloway gave a speech on the morning of the 7/7 bombings in the House of Commons. He offered justifications for the attacks and called them 'entirely predictable.' He also implied that if his advice on foreign policy was not heeded, more attacks of this kind would follow.²⁰²

Galloway said on the BBC's Question Time in 2008 that he does not consider the Taliban an enemy. He said: *'Prince Harry was saying on TV that he was engaging the enemy. I don't know about you, but I have no enemies in Afghanistan. [...] The Taliban are not the enemy for me'*.²⁰³

Galloway is a supporter of the Islamist group Hezbollah, which he has publicly praised and defended. At a demonstration alongside the British Muslim Initiative's Ismail Patel, he said: *'Hezbollah has never been a terrorist organisation, Hezbollah is a resistance movement. [...] I am here to glorify the Lebanese resistance, to glorify the leaders of the Lebanese resistance Hezbollah, and I am here to glorify their leader Syed Hassan Nasrallah. [...] If all the Arab*

201 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Om2Y6twj7E>

202 www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200506/cmhansrd/vo050707/debtext/50707-27.htm

203 www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-523429/George-Galloway-The-Taliban-enemy-me.html

*leaders were like Hassan Nasrallah, Iraq would be free, Palestine would be free, the Arabs would be free! Victory to the Lebanese resistance!*²⁰⁴

He has also spoken at a number of 'al-Quds day' events beneath a poster of Ayatollah Khomeini.²⁰⁵

At one of these events the crowd cheered and applauded when Galloway said the event had been started by Khomeini and the Islamic Republic of Iran.²⁰⁶

George Galloway is a supporter of the Islamist group Hamas, to which he has given large amounts of money. In March 2009 as part of his Viva Palestina group's activities, he was filmed at a demonstration handing money to the group's leaders.

Galloway said later that he was donating money to 'the ministry of health in Gaza to pay for the salaries of doctors and nurses'.²⁰⁷

A report by the Charity Commission found that Viva Palestina's website said it had raised one million pounds. The report said the Commission was only able to identify around £180,000 as having been raised for the charity. It said: 'If the website's claims were accurate this raised concerns that approximately £820,000 was unaccounted for'.²⁰⁸

The Charity Commission was considering removing Viva Palestina from its register in 2012 for being over 300 days late in submitting its accounts.²⁰⁹

Dictatorships

Syria

Galloway met with Bashar al-Assad, dictator of Syria, in 2005 in Damascus, where he gave a speech.²¹⁰

204 www.youtube.com/watch?v=Iml_fx7RhMM

205 www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Zmm-DSCzY8

206 www.youtube.com/watch?v=qVXk2zW24E4

207 www.memritv.org/clip/en/2060.htm. Transcript - www.memritv.org/clip_transcript/en/2060.htm

208 www.gatestoneinstitute.org/1175/uk-george-galloway-funds---surprise---hamas

209 www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/9194168/George-Galloways-Viva-Palestina-could-be-removed-from-Charity-Commissions-register.html

210 <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2005/770/re104.htm>

Galloway said: 'We covered the whole world in 60 minutes. I was very impressed by his knowledge, by his sharpness, by his flexible mind. I was very, very impressed. [...] Syria is lucky to have Bashar al-Assad as her President'.²¹¹

Islamic Republic of Iran

George Galloway has worked as a presenter for Press TV, the English-language propaganda station of the Islamic Regime of Iran.²¹² (For more on Press TV, see 'Yvonne Ridley' section of this report.)

Galloway was paid tens of thousands of pounds by the channel in 2008 alone. In the summer of that year he attended a reception in Iran as a guest of Press TV, who paid for his transport and four nights' accommodation.²¹³

Galloway's programmes for Press TV have been censured by Ofcom for their lack of impartiality.²¹⁴ Press TV published a flattering profile of Galloway on its website in December 2012. It began: '*In a world controlled by pro Jewish-American media, George Galloway has successfully managed to provide an alternative view unmatched by any other Western politician. How does he do it?*'²¹⁵

Since becoming an employee of Iranian state television Galloway has been an outspoken defender of the Islamic regime.

On Channel 5's *The Wright Stuff*, George Galloway said the Iranian regime does not execute people for being gay. He also accused a gay Iranian who had been killed by the regime of being a pederast. The following is a transcript of this part of the programme:

Galloway: The Independent has a story about peers calling on the Home Secretary to halt the deportation of a gay Iranian. In part, this is being used as part of the on-going propaganda against Iran. All the papers seem to imply that you get executed in Iran for being gay. That's not true.

Wright: Well, his boyfriend was hung though, wasn't he?

211 http://web.archive.org/web/20060218011613/http://syriatimes.tishreen.info/_default.asp?FileName=79783973120050807145803

212 www.presstv.ir/section/3510520.html

213 www.theyworkforyou.com/regmem/?p=10218

214 www.guardian.co.uk/media/2009/aug/03/george-galloway-ofcom-press-tv

215 www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/12/12/277630/a-tribute-to-honesty-george-galloway/

Galloway: Yes, but not for being gay. For committing sex crimes against young men.

Wright: Right...

Galloway: Which is – I mean, I'm against executions for any reason, in any place, but it is important to avoid that propaganda.²¹⁶

Galloway appeared on the programme again soon afterwards and repeated his claim. He also attacked Peter Tatchell for having criticised his remarks.²¹⁷ Galloway said: *'What I can't accept is the propaganda that says you get hanged for being gay in Iran. You don't. [...] what I will not accept, is people being used, as Tatchell is, as the pink end of the khaki war machine. That's what Peter Tatchell has become, by attacking Iran in the way that he does.'*²¹⁸

In 2009 Galloway defended the Iranian elections and their result, calling them and the protests they sparked a testament to how democratic Iran is. He said: *'Those who hate Iran, those who hate the Islamic revolution in Iran, those who wish the Shah of Persia, the tyrant, had never been overthrown in the first place, are lining up to give Iran a good kicking. Well, not me.'*

During the programme he said: *'My views are the views of this programme, not anyone else's.'* He also said: *'The people that run this station had no idea what I was going to say and would never try to stop me saying what I believe.'*²¹⁹

Galloway wrote an article for the Daily Record on 15 June in which he said: *'Mahmoud Ahmadinejad commands the loyalty of the poor, the working class and the rural voters whose development he has championed. He lives like them, looks like them - he's never worn a suit since becoming president - and there's more of them than the English speaking more liberal elites now on the streets demonstrating. It will soon fizzle out. [...].'*²²⁰

In another on 22 June he said: *'the BBC – that's the Bush and Blair Corporation – has an agenda in its coverage of Iran, which is vehemently antigovernment. [...] We do not have one iota of evidence that the Iranian election was fiddled.'*²²¹

216 www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ou1es7fNTpk

217 www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2008/mar/26/gallowaysiranianpropaganda

218 www.youtube.com/watch?v=SXZh8FUWnyg&feature=related

219 http://shiatv.net/view_video.php?viewkey=2578e5e627cd93ab0938

220 www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/politics/you-can-count-on-the-fact-election-1027378

221 www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/politics/lets-get-our-facts-straight-1028360

Galloway chaired a StWC meeting in March 2010 to discuss 'police brutality' at their recent protests in London. Two Iranian journalists interrupted his speech and asked him how he could condemn the British police while defending the Iranian regime, which they noted he works for through Press TV. Galloway called for the police to remove the Iranian journalists from the meeting. He also 'insisted' that the police detain the journalists until the meeting was over and its attendees had left.²²²

George Galloway interviewed Mahmoud Ahmadinejad for Press TV in August 2010. During the interview he said that he supported Ahmadinejad's election campaign. He opened the programme by saying: 'This is a special edition of *The Real Deal* – well, they're all special, but this one's extra special.' He said: 'I entered the former royal palace, the Qajar royal family had once lived in the palace, in which I interviewed His Excellency Dr. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran.'

Galloway related his encounter with the Iranian journalists, and said that they had attacked him for his support for Ahmadinejad: '*I have police protection in London from the Iranian opposition because of my support for your election campaign. I mention this so you know where I'm coming from. They attacked me in the parliament building itself, and two were arrested.*'

Galloway asked a series of soft questions in a deferential manner. In the course of the interview he referred to the case of Sakineh Mohammad Ashtiani, the Iranian woman the regime had been trying to stone to death, as the 'so-called stoning case,' involving the 'punishment of a woman convicted of adultery.' He said the case had been 'seized upon by the enemies of Iran and magnified.'

Galloway closed the interview as follows: '*Mr. President, thank you very much indeed for appearing on The Real Deal on Press TV. This is George Galloway from the Presidential headquarters in Tehran, with His Excellency Dr. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Thank you for watching.*'²²³

When Press TV's licence was revoked by Ofcom, Galloway gave an interview to the channel in which he said Ofcom was acting on the wishes of the British government, and that this was 'overtly political censorship.' He said: '*Our crime*

222 <http://hurryupharry.org/2010/03/03/Galloway-begged-the-police-to-detain-us/> (Video available here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=ACE1n4GgYDE)

223 www.youtube.com/watch?v=6NFhclGTFF0

at Press TV was not only that we were telling the truth that some, indeed most, other broadcasters were deliberately concealing, but we were becoming more and more popular'.²²⁴

Saddam Hussein

George Galloway went to Baghdad in 1994 to meet with Saddam Hussein, the dictator of Iraq. Galloway said: *'I thought the President would appreciate to know that even today, three years after the war, I still meet families who are calling their newborn sons Saddam. [...] Sir, I salute your courage, your strength and your indefatigability. And I want you to know that we are with you, until victory, until victory, until Jerusalem'*.²²⁵

Galloway has also met with Hussein's son Uday Hussein,²²⁶ and with his foreign minister and loyal supporter, Tariq Aziz. Galloway has said his relationship with Aziz was 'friendly' and that they have met more than ten times. In 2005, after the overthrow of the Hussein regime, Galloway organised a petition which said that Aziz was a 'political prisoner'.²²⁷

There is also evidence that Galloway's relationship with the Saddam Hussein regime was of a financial nature. A report by the US Senate Subcommittee into corruption of the UN oil-for food programme investigated Galloway's links with the regime in 2005. It found that money went from the regime to a charity run by Galloway, which campaigned for the removal of sanctions on Iraq. The Hussein regime also benefited financially from this arrangement by means of surcharges and 'kickbacks'. It said: *'[The report] contains strong new evidence that, from 1999 to 2003, the Hussein regime granted repeated, substantial oil allocations to British M.P. George Galloway through intermediaries such as Fawaz Zureikat, a Jordanian business man who was Mr. Galloway's close friend and representative in Baghdad.*

'Bank records show that, in 2000, \$150,000 in Iraqi oil sales revenues were transferred from Mr. Zureikat to Mr. Galloway's wife, Dr. Amina Abu-Zayyad; transferred from Mr. Zureikat to the Miriam's Appeal, the British charity and political campaign associated with Mr. Galloway. The new evidence also shows

224 www.presstv.ir/detail/222368.html

225 Cohen, N., *What's Left?*, Harper Perennial, 2007, p.291

226 www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/news/35554/My-pal-the-psychopath.html (Video here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=j1NfnbJr-qg)

227 www.standard.co.uk/news/galloway-calls-for-aziz-to-be-freed-7268922.html

*that, in connection with these oil sales, Mr. Zureikat paid illegal surcharges to the Hussein regime totaling over \$1.6 million’.*²²⁸

A 2007 report by the Common Standards and Privileges committee found that Galloway’s actions had brought the House of Commons into disrepute. It said: ‘there is strong circumstantial evidence that the oil-for-food programme was used by the Iraqi government, with Mr. Galloway’s connivance, to fund the campaigning activities of the Mariam Appeal. [...] We believe he was complicit in the concealment of the true source of the funds for the Mariam Appeal’.²²⁹

George Galloway was expelled from the Labour party in 2004 after it found him guilty on several charges of bringing the party into disrepute. The StWC said the expulsion was an ‘absolute disgrace’.²³⁰

After the Hussein regime was overthrown, George Galloway supported ‘the resistance’ in Iraq. Galloway said in the StWC’s official history: *‘The Iraqi resistance has killed or wounded nearly 15,000 invader soldiers. The forces of the puppet regime’s ‘National Guard’ and police ranks are being decimated. [...] Of course some of the acts of the disparate hydra-headed resistance are repugnant. But in the words of veteran anti-war leader Tariq Ali, ‘If occupation is ugly, how can resistance to it be pretty?’*²³¹

This is also the position of the StWC, of which Tariq Ali is vice president.²³² In a 2004 statement it said: *‘StWC has always refrained from taking any position on the internal development of Iraq, since this is solely the preserve of the Iraqi people themselves. [...] The StWC reaffirms its call for an end to the occupation, the return of all British troops in Iraq to this country and recognises once more the legitimacy of the struggle of Iraqis, by whatever means they find necessary, to secure such ends’.*²³³

Galloway went on to say of ‘the resistance’: *‘As Claire Short said, they are the heirs of the American revolutionists who drove out the English crown; and*

228 www.levin.senate.gov/newsroom/press/release?id=f59bbb86-430a-43ff-9755-0c1980d193b8

229 www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200607/cmselect/cmstnprv/909/90904.htm

230 www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2003/oct/23/labour.georgegalloway

231 Murray, A. and German, L., *Stop the War: the story of Britain’s biggest mass movement*, Bookmarks Publications, 2005, p.266

232 www.stopwar.org.uk/index.php/about/steering-committee-and-officers

233 <http://web.archive.org/web/20041024161227/www.idao.org/stopwar-statement.html>

*the French resistance which, by all means necessary, fought the German Nazi hordes who overwhelmed their country’.*²³⁴

Peter Tatchell said in 2004: *‘Right now, the STWC supports “the resistance” in Iraq by any means necessary – a tacit endorsement of the suicide bombing, hostage-taking and execution of innocent civilians, including brave, selfless aid workers, election supervisors and ordinary Iraqis on their way to school and work. The STWC justifies this carnage in the name of “national liberation”. Motivated more by hatred of the US and British governments than by love for the Iraqi people, many so-called leftists support a “resistance” that, if victorious, would bring to power Baathists, Islamic fundamentalists and pro-al-Qaeda militants. Is that what the left now stands for? Neo-fascism, so long as it is anti-western?’*²³⁵

Unite Against Fascism

Unite Against Fascism was launched in 2003 to oppose the electoral gains of the British National Party.²³⁶ Its website says: *‘Over the last decade, racism and Islamophobia in society have grown. As a result, we have seen and increase in racist violence and attacks on multiculturalism. This has culminated in the rise of the far right and fascist organisations, in particular the British National Party’.*²³⁷

UAF is a coalition dominated by members of the Socialist Workers Party.²³⁸ Its joint secretary, Weyman Bennett²³⁹ is on the SWP’s central committee,²⁴⁰ and UAF assistant secretary, Martin Smith,²⁴¹ was national secretary of the SWP until 2011. He remains a senior member on the party’s central committee.²⁴²

UAF’s launch was announced in *Socialist Worker*, the newspaper of the SWP.²⁴³

234 Murray, A. and German, L., *Stop the War: the story of Britain’s biggest mass movement*, Bookmarks Publications, 2005, p.266

235 www.labourfriendsofiraq.org.uk/archives/000147.html

236 www.socialistworker.co.uk/art.php?id=1976

237 <http://uaf.org.uk/about/>

238 www.workersliberty.org/story/2009/07/28/open-letter-weyman-bennett-and-uaf-united-working-class-campaign-against-fascism

239 <http://uaf.org.uk/about/our-officers/>

240 www.socialistworker.co.uk/art.php?id=27201

241 <http://uaf.org.uk/about/our-officers/>

242 www.workersliberty.org/story/2011/01/11/new-upheavals-swp-leadership

243 www.socialistworker.co.uk/art.php?id=1976

Copies of the paper have been sold at UAF events.²⁴⁴

The StWC and the SWP have tried to gain support for themselves by claiming to be protecting Muslims from the racism of the BNP, and from imperialism globally.²⁴⁵

The former has a section on its website dedicated to Islamophobia,²⁴⁶ and both regularly hold events on this subject.²⁴⁷

UAF has often had members of Respect and the StWC, such as Salma Yaqoob²⁴⁸ and George Galloway,²⁴⁹ as speakers at its events.

Maryam Namazie, One Law for All spokesperson, said: *'Islamophobia is a political term to scaremonger people into silence and stop criticism of Islam and Islamism by conflating criticism of religion and belief and of a far-Right political movement with an attack on Muslims.'*

As with these affiliated groups, Unite Against Fascism works closely with Islamist groups to increase its own support.

Ken Livingstone

Ken Livingstone helped set up Unite Against Fascism while he was Mayor of London, and has since been its chair.²⁵⁰ UAF's current chair Steve Hart,²⁵¹ an officer for Unite, was vice-chair of Livingstone's election campaign in 2012.²⁵²

Ken Livingstone welcomed and hosted Yusuf al-Qaradawi at city hall in 2004. (See 'The case of Qaradawi' section of this report.) Livingstone said Qaradawi

244 www.swp.org.uk/party-notes

245 www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2004/jul/13/religion.world

246 www.stopwar.org.uk/index.php/islamophobia

247 www.youtube.com/watch?v=scPcAMBOVqs

248 <http://uaf.org.uk/2010/05/musicians-politicians-and-faith-leaders-say-vote-to-stop-the-bnp/>,
www.socialistworker.co.uk/art.php?id=24368,
and www.socialistworker.co.uk/art.php?id=24368

249 <http://uaf.org.uk/2010/11/tony-benn-george-galloway-to-speak-at-6-nov-demo/>

250 <http://uaf.org.uk/2009/10/ken-livingstone-speaks-out-against-%E2%80%9Cthe-bbc%E2%80%99s-gift-to-the-bnp%E2%80%9D/>

251 <http://uaf.org.uk/about/our-officers/>

252 www.guardian.co.uk/profile/steve-hart

was ‘an absolutely sane Islamist engaged with the world.’ He said: ‘Of all the Muslim leaders in the world today, Sheikh Qaradawi is the most powerfully progressive force for change and for engaging Islam with western values. I think his is very similar to the position of Pope John Paul XXIII.’²⁵³

He refused to meet a coalition of community groups critical of Qaradawi who presented him with a summary of Qaradawi’s views and politics,²⁵⁴ and instead published a dossier of his own defending Qaradawi and attacking his critics.²⁵⁵ In the report, he painted a rosy picture of Qaradawi while labelling Qaradawi’s critics ‘extremists’.²⁵⁶

At a 2007 debate organised by Livingstone, the Mayor said: ‘*I have always supported progressive elements. I welcome Qaradawi, because he represents the strongest force for modernisation of Islam. [...] He is the future of Islam.*’²⁵⁷

Livingstone repeated his defence of Qaradawi in a 2012 interview, saying the cleric had been mistranslated by a Zionist organisation. He also said there is a website posing as Qaradawi which has ‘Saudi funding to demonize him.’²⁵⁸

Qaradawi’s statements had in fact been taken from his own website and writings, which were published in English.²⁵⁹

Ken Livingstone has worked as a presenter for Press TV, the English-language propaganda station owned by the Islamic Regime of Iran. (See ‘Yvonne Ridley’ section of this report.) It is estimated that by 2011 Livingstone had received thousands of pounds from the station.²⁶⁰

Livingstone refused to stop working for the channel when criticised. He said: ‘*Press TV is one of the few TV channels anywhere in the West that fairly presents the Palestinian case. [...] The important thing to remember about Press*

253 www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1498358/Radical-imam-like-pope-says-mayor.html

254 www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2004/nov/11/london.religion?INTCMP=SRCH

255 http://static.london.gov.uk/news/docs/qaradawi_dossier.pdf

256 http://maryamnamazie.com/tv/mayor_London_political_Islam_us.html

257 www.youtube.com/watch?v=XNRsPs7vDds&list=PL581E170AE8760519

258 <http://web.archive.org/web/20120428145414/www.gaydarradio.com/news/2012/3/kenlivingstone---presstv-and-qaradawi.html>

259 <http://web.archive.org/web/20120118201332/www.galha.org/briefing/qaradawi.html>

260 www.standard.co.uk/news/ken-livingstone-under-fire-for-earning-thousands-from-iranian-tv-role-6557372.html

TV is that it is a British company, wholly owned in Britain, that makes and sells programmes to Iran and to other places.'

As mentioned earlier in this report, Press TV is owned and run by the Iranian regime.²⁶¹

Livingstone defended his decision to work on the programme during his 2012 mayoral election campaign. He said he took the job so he could talk directly to the Iranian people, and likened working for Press TV to writing for Rupert Murdoch's newspapers.²⁶²

Instead of using his programme to criticise the Iranian regime, Livingstone chose to 'talk directly to the Iranian people' about the west and Israel.²⁶³

Livingstone was back working for Press TV as a presenter in October 2012.²⁶⁴

Ken Livingstone has benefited from the support of Islamist groups in British elections. In 2008 the British Muslim Initiative and the Islamic Forum of Europe ran a campaign, 'Muslims4Ken', in which they encouraged Muslims to vote for Livingstone for London Mayor.²⁶⁵

An early campaign statement warned that Livingstone's opponent Boris Johnson is an Islamophobe. It said: *'Ken Livingstone is the best choice you can make on May 1st. He's stood up in support of a multicultural society, supported Muslims against racism and Islamophobia and helped improve the lives of all London's communities. Boris Johnson would be a disaster for London. He is an Islamophobe who has insulted and condemned Islam and Muslims. We must not sit by and allow Boris Johnson to become the next Mayor and stir up more Islamophobia against London's Muslims - make your vote count on May 1st.'*²⁶⁶

The campaign also leafleted mosques with the claim that Boris Johnson had 'expressed his hatred against Islam' and wanted to ban the Quran.²⁶⁷

261 <http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/andrewgilligan/100072786/ken-livingstone-refuses-to-stop-working-for-iranian-dictatorship/>

262 <http://web.archive.org/web/20120428145414/www.gaydarradio.com/news/2012/3/kenlivingstone---presstv-and-qaradawi.html>

263 www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2012/mar/04/nick-cohen-ken-livingstone-tax-avoidance

264 <http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/andrewgilligan/100183873/ken-livingstone-returns-to-iran-state-tv/>

265 www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/7386900/Islamists-got-voters-out-for-Livingstone.html

266 <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/islamiccommunitynet/message/13862>

267 www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/7386900/Islamists-got-voters-out-for-Livingstone.html

'Muslims4Ken' was run by Anas al-Tikriti of the British Muslim Initiative and Azad Ali, community affairs co-ordinator for the Islamic Forum of Europe.²⁶⁸ The campaign's website featured a video interview with Livingstone conducted by Tikriti.²⁶⁹

After the election, in an article called 'We got out the vote', Tikriti said: 'the campaign mobilised the Muslim community, traditionally politically apathetic, to turn out in unprecedented numbers.'²⁷⁰

The British Muslim Initiative campaigned for Livingstone again in 2012 with a special flyer saying Muslims should vote for Ken Livingstone. It said Livingstone had: 'campaigned for the respect of faith communities and multiculturalism, and against racism and Islamophobia.' It also said he was 'against illegal wars, namely Iraq.'²⁷¹

Ken Livingstone campaigned for Lutfur Rahman, the IFE sympathiser and funder, in 2010 against the Labour party candidate, who, he said, was not credible. This was a breach of the rules of the Labour party, which has yet to enforce them in this case.²⁷² Rahman had been dropped by Labour over his links with the IFE and his failure to declare large donations.²⁷³

Livingstone has since been working to have Rahman reinstated as a Labour party member.²⁷⁴

Livingstone also received support from Lutfur Rahman and Azad Ali during the 2012 mayoral election.²⁷⁵

268 Ibid

269 www.muslimsforken.blogspot.co.uk/2008/04/anas-altikriti-interviews-ken.html

270 www.muslimsforken.blogspot.co.uk/2008/05/anas-altikirit-we-got-out-vote.html

271 Published here: <http://bminitiative.net/action-alerts/371-vote-ken> Copy in author's possession

272 www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-11569758

273 <http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/andrewgilligan/100112318/lutfur-rahman-all-his-controversies-in-one-place/>

274 <http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/andrewgilligan/100198319/ken-livingstone-ridiculed-as-he-tries-to-help-lutfur-rahman/>

275 <http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/andrewgilligan/100154198/ken-livingstone-muslim-extremists-and-their-friends-urge-you-to-back-him/>

Azad Ali

Azad Ali was appointed vice-chair of Unite Against Fascism in 2012. Ali is community affairs co-ordinator for the Islamic Forum of Europe, which is an arm of the Islamist group Jamaat-e-Islami. (See 'What is the Islamic Forum of Europe?' section of this report.)

In 2008 Ali wrote on the IFE blog that al-Qaeda recruiter Anwar al-Awlaki was 'one of [his] favourite speakers and scholars.' He wrote favourably of Awkali's blog, and said: *'I really do love him for the sake of Allah, he has an uncanny way of explaining things to people which is endearing.'*

On a separate occasion he wrote: *'Reading his blogs, one cannot help but feel his frustration at the constant denial of Islamic principals. Worse is the complete incompetence of some Muslims to distinguish between Jihad and acts of murder.'*²⁷⁶

Earlier that year Ali asked readers of the IFE blog to nominate a 'Commander of the Believers' for a future Islamic caliphate. He said: *'Since we are all working our socks off, in different ways, for the resurgence of the Khilafa, I have one question who would you give bayyah to today and what would you say are the qualities needed for them to get your vote?'*

Ali chose Ismail Haniyeh, leader of Hamas. He said: *'My vote for the title of Amir al-Mu'mineen would have to go to the Palestinian Prime Minister, Ismail Haniyeh. Not only is a motivational leader, with political depth and skill, but also he is a Hafiz of the Qur'an, Mashallah!'*²⁷⁷

In 2008 Ali used quotations from a jihadist writer to argue that it was a religious obligation to kill British and US soldiers in Iraq.²⁷⁸ When a newspaper published this he attempted to sue them, but the judge said his case was bound to fail and had an 'absence of reality.' Justice Eady said that this was the plain meaning of Ali's blog post, which 'seems clearly to convey the meaning that, on the "balanced" view of jihad, killing the occupying troops would still have been justified in November 2008.'²⁷⁹

276 <http://henryjacksonsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/anwar.pdf> (p. 12)

277 <http://hurryupharry.org/2008/11/25/azad-ali-i-am-working-for-a-hamas-caliphate/>

278 <http://hurryupharry.org/2009/01/23/azad-ali-oh-no-he-didnt-oh-yes-he-did/>

279 www.pressgazette.co.uk/node/44965#

Channel 4's Dispatches investigation into the IFE contained footage of one of Azad Ali's community radio programmes being recorded. It showed Ali saying: *'Democracy, if it means that, you know, at the expense of not implementing the Sharia, no-one's gonna agree with that. Of course no-one agrees with that.'*

When a caller asked, 'What do you think about working for the Khilafa?', Ali replied: 'That's something that you should be doing, yes.' The caller said, 'Definitely, yeah?' Ali replied, 'yeah,' and his IFE co-presenter said, 'You have to, man!'²⁸⁰

Ali later threatened an undercover Channel 4 reporter who had worked on the programme. He said: *'We've tracked you down. Yes, Atif, we've got a picture of you and a lot more than you thought we had. We've tracked you down to different places. And if people are gonna turn what I've just said into a threat, that's their fault, innit?'*²⁸¹

UAF and Islamism

Unite Against Fascism events have been organised with the clout and support of Islamist groups. In July 2010 the *Socialist Worker* said: 'Unite Against Fascism and the Muslim Association of Britain have called a national demonstration – 'No to racism, No to Islamophobia' – on Saturday 6 November in central London.'²⁸²

In June 2010 UAF said it had the backing of 'three major Muslim umbrella organisations' including the Islamic Forum of Europe for one of its protests.²⁸³ IFE president Musleh Faradhi²⁸⁴ spoke at a UAF demonstration in 2010, with his name listed on its flyer.²⁸⁵

Faradhi wrote an article in 2011 defending Sharia courts and opposing the Equality Bill supported by One Law for All. He said: *'Sharia remains one of the most misunderstood and misrepresented terms in the west. [...] The*

280 <http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/andrewgilligan/100060409/britains-islamic-republic-full-transcript-of-channel-4-dispatches-programme-on-lutfur-rahman-the-ife-and-tower-hamlets-the-full-transcript/>

281 www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstoppers/religion/7437197/Backlash-at-the-mosque.html

282 www.socialistworker.co.uk/art.php?id=21967

283 <http://uaf.org.uk/2010/06/unions-and-mosques-back-east-london-demo-against-ed/>

284 www.guardian.co.uk/profile/musleh-faradhi

285 <http://uaf.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/whitechapelrally.pdf>

*blanket claim that women's witness is worth half that of men totally misses the complexities of Islamic law. In some limited areas of Islamic law, two female witnesses are required where one male witness will suffice. However, there are other areas where one female witness is sufficient. [...] Does this bill do more harm than good? The answer surely must be yes.*²⁸⁶

Unite Against Fascism has organised protests with the British Muslim Initiative²⁸⁷ and the London Muslim Centre, which is part of the East London Mosque complex where the IFE is based.²⁸⁸ UAF has also campaigned with the IFE at the East London Mosque to encourage people there to attend UAF protests.²⁸⁹ Anas al-Tikriti spoke at a UAF demonstration in 2010 representing the British Muslim Initiative.²⁹⁰ A Muslim Association of Britain activist was quoted by the Socialist Worker at a UAF event in April 2010.²⁹¹

In 2011 Unite Against Fascism held a protest against the French ban of the Islamic face-veil, or niqab. The Socialist Workers Party's website said: 'The protest is called by UAF and One Society Many Cultures and supported by the British Muslim Initiative and Islamic Forum of Europe.'²⁹²

The event featured a speech from the BMI's Ismail Patel alongside the SWP's Weyman Bennett and Martin Smith.²⁹³

Unite Against Fascism held a demonstration in Whitechapel in June 2010 after an Islamic conference was cancelled by the proposed venue. The 'Book that Shook the World' event at the Troxy was set to feature a number of Islamist and jihadist speakers, including Haitham al-Haddad and Suhaib Hasan,²⁹⁴ both of whom are judges at the Islamic Sharia Council.²⁹⁵ In 2008 Hasan said: '*If sharia law is implemented, then you can turn this country into a haven of peace because once a thief's hand is cut off nobody is going to steal [...] Once, just only once, if an adulterer is stoned nobody is going to commit this crime at all.*

286 www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/belief/2011/jun/22/sharia-bill-lady-cox

287 <http://uaf.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/nov6col3.pdf>

288 <http://uaf.org.uk/2010/11/saturday-6-november-latest-demo-updates/>

289 www.socialistworker.co.uk/art.php?id=25910

290 <http://uaf.org.uk/2010/06/rally-speakers-for-east-london-demo/>

291 www.socialistworker.co.uk/art.php?id=20802

292 <http://uaf.org.uk/2011/03/protest-against-french-veil-ban-no-to-islamophobia/>

293 www.socialistworker.co.uk/art.php?id=24171

294 <http://web.archive.org/web/20100718025823/http://uk-ic.com/events/>

295 <http://web.archive.org/web/20120716040707/http://www.islamic-sharia.org/about-us/about-us-4.html>

*[...] We want to offer it [sharia] to the British society. If they accept it, it is for their good and if they don't accept it they'll need more and more prisons.*²⁹⁶

Tower Hamlets council welcomed the Troxy's decision to cancel the event, along with the news that the English Defence League's proposed march against it had also been scrapped. It requested that Unite Against Fascism call off its plans for a counter-demonstration as well to avoid trouble and disruption in the borough.²⁹⁷ (Police have blamed some of the violence at EDL protests on UAF's counter-demonstrations. In March 2010 Weyman Bennett was arrested and charged with conspiracy to organise violent disorder at a UAF protest.)²⁹⁸

However, UAF said their demonstration would go ahead anyway. It said: 'we need to stay vigilant and show that the EDL racists are not welcome in Tower Hamlets or anywhere else.'²⁹⁹

Speakers at the UAF demonstration included Lutfur Rahman, IFE president Musleh Farahdi, Weyman Bennett³⁰⁰ and George Galloway, who endorsed Lutfur Rahman for mayor of Tower Hamlets.³⁰¹

Labour councillor Helal Abbas also spoke at the event. (Abbas was later smeared during the Tower Hamlets mayoral election by supporters of Lutfur Rahman. See 'What is the Islamic Forum of Europe?' section of this report.)³⁰² Abbas had been one of the councillors in favour of cancelling the Troxy event,³⁰³ and was reportedly 'booed off the stage' by the UAF crowd. Rahman used his speech to defend the Troxy event and criticise Tower Hamlets council. According to one report: 'he went into a long diatribe about the Troxy, and what was going to be a peaceful islamic conference, informing us that this was cancelled by our Council. That the council had no right to do this, and we must boot out these

296 www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1576066/We-want-to-offer-sharia-law-to-Britain.html

297 www.eastlondonadvertiser.co.uk/news/council_delighted_at_decision_to_scrap_east_end_islamic_conference_1_672311

298 www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/police-blame-antifascists-for-violence-1925038.html

299 <http://uaf.org.uk/2010/06/unity-demo-goes-ahead-as-edl-drops-planned-invasion-of-east-london/>

300 <http://uaf.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/whitechapelrally.pdf>

301 <http://web.archive.org/web/20101129024821/www.therespectparty.net/breakingnews.php?id=905>

302 <http://uaf.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/whitechapelrally.pdf>

303 www.eastlondonadvertiser.co.uk/news/council_delighted_at_decision_to_scrap_east_end_islamic_conference_1_672311

people and vote for strong leadership for our borough.’ [sic]³⁰⁴ (Rahman was elected mayor of Tower Hamlets later that year with the help of the IFE and the support of UAF chair Ken Livingstone. See ‘What is the Islamic Forum of Europe?’ section of this report.)

One Law for All held a rally on the same day outside Downing Street opposing Sharia law in favour of secularism.³⁰⁵ A counter-demonstration to promote Islamism and Sharia law was held by Muslims Against Crusades, which is thought to be the Islamist group al-Muhajiroun using another name.³⁰⁶

Members of the English Defence League arrived in small numbers to demonstrate against MAC, but were arrested by the police for not having permission for their protest.

Towards the end of the One Law for All rally a parade of young men marched to Downing Street carrying UAF placards, having attended the UAF event in Whitechapel. They were escorted by the police to where the rally was stationed and joined Muslims Against Crusades in their chant of ‘Allahu Akbar!’³⁰⁷ Video footage of the day shows that the young men later joined the MAC demonstration.³⁰⁸

One Law for All wrote to Unite Against Fascism in July and September 2010, hoping to clarify their position on Islamism and Sharia Law.³⁰⁹

UAF did not respond. A One Law for All supporter brought this to the attention of a spokesperson for UAF’s Leicester branch, who replied on Facebook. He said: *‘If Jews were the primary target of the EDL and solidarity with them meant standing with hardcore zionists, would that mean there was total confusion within UAF on Palestinian rights, or simply that solidarity with groups who are faced with persecution by fascists is not conditional upon their acceptance of a certain political or religious line? Indeed in the resistance to the Nazis during WW2, communists and zionists often united on that very basis.’* [sic]³¹⁰

304 <http://towerhamletswatch.wordpress.com/2010/06/20/cllr-helal-abbas-booed-off-stage-at-uaf-rally/>

305 www.onelawforall.org.uk/successful-day-against-sharia-and-religious-laws-in-uk/

306 www.standpointmag.co.uk/node/3562

307 www.onelawforall.org.uk/20-june-success-against-sharia-laws-video/

308 www.youtube.com/watch?v=JX-Qhbu-E7U

309 www.onelawforall.org.uk/one-law-for-alls-question-for-united-against-fascism/

310 <http://freethoughtblogs.com/maryamnamazie/2010/09/22/is-this-united-against-fascisms-official-position/>

This suggests that UAF is willing to ally itself with Islamists if Muslims are threatened by the EDL. One Law for All found this response to be unsatisfactory and emailed UAF requesting a meeting with its leadership. UAF did not respond. One Law for All phoned the UAF's office and spoke to a UAF representative who dismissed the idea of a meeting. She said: 'We don't have a position on Sharia law. We are an anti-fascist organisation.' She said UAF opposes groups like the BNP and the EDL. She added: 'There is only one group that is threatening communities like Tower Hamlets, and that has fascist members, and that's the BNP and the EDL.' When asked about Islamic fascist groups, she said: 'There is no such thing.'³¹¹

A year later UAF published an interview on its website with Dilowar Khan, director of the East London Mosque and London Muslim Centre. The UAF said Khan 'describes how local people united against the racist English Defence League in Tower Hamlets last year.' In the extract they published, Khan defended the speakers at the cancelled Troxy event, who, he said, had been lied about by the EDL.³¹²

311 Phone call 29/09/10 to UAF office. Email requesting a meeting and phone call notes in author's possession.

312 <http://uaf.org.uk/2011/07/exclusive-book-extract-east-london-mosques-dilowar-khan/>

Postscript: Politics of Betrayal

By Maryam Namazie

The politics of the pro-Islamist Left is a politics of betrayal.

It's a betrayal of the dissenters and victims of Islamism but also of the very principles that the Left has historically defended (from social justice, egalitarianism, secularism, universalism, and human liberation, including from religion).

This Left uses multiculturalism, charges of racism and Islamophobia, and anti-imperialism, amongst others to defend the far-Right political Islamic movement.

Multiculturalism and Cultural Relativism

The Pro-Islamist Left relies on multiculturalism (not as a positive lived experience but as a social policy and political point of view) to deny the existence of dissent by pigeonholing innumerable individuals with innumerable characteristics into one imagined homogeneous grouping: 'the Muslim community' or 'the Muslim world'. And since it is those in power that determine the dominant culture, this point of view sees Islamist values and sensibilities as that of 'authentic Muslims'.

In fact, 'Muslims' or those labelled as such include secularists, ex-Muslims, atheists, free thinkers, women's rights activists, LGBT campaigners and socialists.

Conflating Islamism with Muslim is a narrative peddled by Islamists in an attempt to feign representation.

Contrary to how it's viewed, regressive Islamists are given authority as 'community leaders' not because they actually represent the 'Muslim Community' but because of their access to the state, political power and their links with the political Islamic movement. Multiculturalism is a cheap way for the state to outsource social control.

Clearly, the 'Muslim community' is not synonymous with Islamism any more than English is synonymous with the English Defence League or Christian with the Christian-Right.

Ironically, like the far-Right which 'despises' multiculturalism yet benefits from its idea of difference to scapegoat the 'other' and promote its own form of white identity politics, the post-modernist Left also uses multiculturalism to defend cultural and moral relativism and side with the oppressor.

To accept the Islamist narrative that Muslim equates Islamist is to hand over countless individuals to the political Islamic movement and to ignore the dissent, political, social and civil struggles and class politics.

This conflation means that those who challenge Islamism are accused of cultural imperialism and orientalism because the pro-Islamist Left has bought into the culturally-relativist notion that societies in the Middle East and North Africa (and the 'Muslim community' in the west) are 'Islamic' and 'conservative'. Whilst those in power determine the dominant culture, there is no one homogeneous culture anywhere. Those who consider opposition to the veil or Sharia law as 'foreign' and 'culturally inappropriate' are only considering Islamism's sensibilities and values, not that of the many who resist.

Only those who see their rights and lives as separate and different from those deemed 'other' and who have bought into (or are selling) Islamism's narrative can see solidarity and the demand for equality in this warped way.

In fact, this politics doesn't merely ignore dissent, in many ways it forbids it. The likes of StWC, Socialist Workers Party, Unite against Fascism, Islamophobia Watch, and Respect Party or Ken Livingstone and George Galloway are there as prefects to silence dissenters and defend Islamism as a defence of 'Muslims'. There are many examples to show that they equate Muslim with Islamist.

In responding to those opposing its alliance with the Muslim Association of Britain (which is understood to be a branch of the Muslim Brotherhood), the StWC's leadership Andrew Murray and Lindsey German have written: *'Anyone remotely acquainted with the British trade union movement will be aware that neither sexism nor homophobia are uncommon in its ranks. [...] woman can be subjected to more crude sexist behaviour than they might be likely to encounter within the Muslim Association of Britain. No one would suggest that an anti-war movement should have no truck with trade unionism until its ranks are 100 percent cleansed of such behaviour. Yet this is good enough as a stick to beat Muslims. Such attitudes indicate a form of racism, a desire to hold their organisations at arm's length for the flaws which are, in some measure, tolerable in ours.'*

The comparison is absurd. The difference of course is that the ethos of the trade union is not anti-woman, its ethos does not say that apostates should be killed or as the head of the MAB said recently at a debate with One Law for All that women should be stoned to death. StWC's alliance with the MAB is akin to aligning with the EDL and then saying that racism exists in the ranks of the trade unions too so why single out the English!?

Racism and Islamophobia

This pro-Islamist Left deems any criticism of Islam or Islamism as racism or Islamophobia. However, criticising a religion, ideology or political movement – far-Right or otherwise – has nothing to do with racism. In fact, Islamophobia is a political term used to scaremonger people into silence.

In some ways, these bogus accusations serve Islamism in the same way that Sharia law serves them where they are in power. It helps to threaten, intimidate and silence criticism and dissent. Charges of offence and Islamophobia are the equivalent of 'secular' fatwas. It is a warning by the powers that be of what is acceptable and what is not; of what is sacred and cannot and must not be challenged.

This is of course not to ignore that racism exists. Of course it does. But racism cannot be stopped by silencing much needed criticism of Islam and Islamism. Also as campaigner Rahila Gupta says: *'Recent anti-racist alliances... reveal the capitulation of the left to the fascists within while organising against the fascists without. We should be sophisticated enough by now to construct a politics that is simultaneously anti-racist and anti-fundamentalist so that vulnerable groups like women, lesbians and gays and religious minorities do not get hung out to dry. As feminists we have been abandoned by those who should have been supporting our right to make 'legitimate criticism'. They feel now, during the War on Terror, is not the right time. In a racist society, it is never the right time. When we expose the underbelly of our communities we are told that we are providing ammunition for racists. For us it isn't a choice. We can't hide one evil to fight another.'*

Anti-imperialism and force of resistance

Fundamentally, this Left's support of Islamism comes down to its affinity with Islamism, which it sees as a force of resistance against imperialism. If racism was its real concern, it wouldn't support the blatantly racist notion of different and lesser standards and rights for those deemed 'different'.

This Left is part of an anti-colonial movement whose perspectives coincide with that of the ruling classes in the so-called Third World. It is on the side of the 'colonies' no matter what goes on there. And their understanding of the 'colonies' is Eurocentric, patronising and even racist. To them the people in these countries (and the 'Muslim minority in the West') are one and the same with the Islamists they are struggling against. This is why StWC manhandles and expels anti-Iranian regime activists from its demonstrations and rejects resolutions that simultaneously opposes a war on Iran and the regime's attacks on the working class and population at large. It sees Islamism as a force for resistance, whilst it is nothing more than a regressive force for repression. An enemy's enemy is not necessarily an ally.

As Women Living Under Muslim Laws says: 'Fundamentalist terror is by no means a tool of the poor against the rich, of the Third World against the West, of people against capitalism. It is not a legitimate response that can be supported by the progressive forces of the world. Its main target is the internal democratic opposition to their theocratic project and to their project of controlling all aspects of society in the name of religion, including education, the legal system, youth services, etc. When fundamentalists come to power, they silence the people, they physically eliminate dissidents, writers, journalists, poets, musicians, painters – like fascists do. Like fascists, they physically eliminate the 'untermensch' – the subhumans –, among them 'inferior races', gays, mentally or physically disabled people. And they lock women 'in their place', which as we know from experience ends up being a straight jacket...'

What's most ironic is that Islamism is a force that came into existence as a far-Right, anti-Left movement, supported by Western powers. It's only after 9/11 that their relationship has changed and only to some extent. It's still a close ally in helping to manage revolutions and rebellions in the Middle East and North Africa.

This politics of betrayal supports a far-Right movement that has slaughtered an entire generation in a place like Iran, that just recently assassinated socialist

leader Chokri Belaid in Tunisia, and that shot 15 year old Malala Yousefzai in Pakistan for wanting education for girls...

Clearly, the Pro-Islamist Left's politics of betrayal is just as inhuman as that of the far-Right. It's particularly dangerous given that unlike the far-Right it has managed to gain portrayal in mainstream discourse as 'progressive politics'.

Any principled position must oppose the far-Right of all varieties but also this pro-Islamist Left and rather side with universalism, equality for all, secularism as well as citizens and human beings, irrespective of beliefs.

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