

Expressions of concern about Islamic fundamentalism should also be avoided, because many perfectly moderate Muslims follow strict adherence to traditional Islamic teachings and are likely to perceive such expressions as a negative comment on their own approach to their faith.

The shrill and defensive tone which has been adopted sometimes, in the past by some Muslim representative bodies risks alarming Muslims rather than reassuring them. We need to make further progress in transforming our relationship with the MCB and others into one of greater trust and partnership, building on the helpful contacts which the Home Secretary and Foreign Secretary have had with them recently. Ministers of both departments plan regular meetings with Muslim representatives.

It is privately, within such partnerships, that Muslim representatives should be challenged to work harder at improving their relations and image with other communities, and to be more unequivocal in their condemnation of terrorism and espousal of democratic values. We need to find ways of strengthening the hand of moderate Muslim leaders, including the young Muslims with future leadership potential, through the status which contact with government can confer, and through practical capacity building measures.

Linked to that, we need to find ways of supporting the Muslim community in efforts to improve the quality of Imams, many of whom are poorly educated and come from unsophisticated backgrounds abroad with little understanding of the UK and sometimes with crude and extremist teachings. Planned work includes measures to encourage more home grown Imams and raise the qualifications of Imams from

abroad through changes in immigration rules.

Home Office

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

April 2004

ANNEXES

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ANNEX A

This annex will contain the same action plan as is set out in the Summary paper.

Ideology and Propagation of Extremist Organisations

Hizb-ut-Tahrir (HT) and Al Muhajiroon are probably the two extremist organisations with the highest profile in Britain. They are therefore a good case study as an example of some of the types of beliefs held by extremist organisations.

Belief system:

Both organisations come from the same origins (i.e. Al Muhajiroon is a breakaway organisation from HT). The movement itself was founded by a Palestinian jurist by the name of Taqi-ad-din Nabhani. The British counterpart was set-up by the Omar Bakri Muhammad.

“Hizb ut-Tahrir is a political party whose ideology is Islam, so politics is its work and Islam is its ideology. It works within the Ummah and together with her, so that she adopts Islam as her cause and is led to restore the Khilafah (Caliphate) and the ruling by what Allah revealed. Hizb ut-Tahrir is a political group and not a priestly one. Nor is it an academic, educational or a charity group. The Islamic thought is the soul of its body, its core and the secret of its life.”

Both organisations believe in a 3-stage methodology of reviving the Caliphate, the first two stages being the most important.

Stage One: 'Culturing' people in their way of thinking, and recruiting members to propagate the revival of the Caliphate as the way to salvation'.

Stage Two: "Publicly" opposing the non-Muslims and those Muslims who have 'strayed' from the true path of Islam.

HT consider themselves to be at stage one, whilst Al Muhajiroon consider themselves to be at stage two.

A typical example of each of their activities is:

- a.) Hizb-ut-Tahrir- A conference on whether Muslims could be British (the conclusion was that they couldn't)
- b.) Al Muhajiroon- A conference on the 'Magnificent 19'- commemorating those responsible for 9/11.

If it is taken that both organisations are part of the same ideology, the statements below (made at the Al-Muhajiroon conference) are an indication of their beliefs and methodology.

- 1.) A Fatwa that those who join the British army are apostates and those who fight in Iraq or Afghanistan or elsewhere against Muslims are apostates because of their war against Muslims.
- 2.) That integration with the *Kuffar* (Non-Muslims) and their *kufur* (non-belief) is not allowed and no one should be proud to British or become MP's, MI5 members, government officials, etc. Indeed to join these bodies is an act of apostasy.
- 3.) To urge Muslims world-wide to work for the establishment of the Khilafah, a vital issue for Muslims today following 79 years living without an Islamic state.
- 4.) To urge Muslims to support the Jihad wherever it is taking place, whether in Kashmir, Palestine, Chechnya, etc- against the aggressors, usurpers and occupiers in those regions.
- 5.) To call Muslims to do all they can to free the prisoners in Guantanamo Bay.
- 6.) To call the Queen, the British establishment and the public to embrace Islam.
- 7.) To explain that Muslims living in the US and UK are generally under a Covenant of security in that, in return for their life and wealth being protected they cannot attack the lives or property of the host nation. But those outside the UK & US do not have such a covenant with the UK and the US.

- 8.) To tell Muslims not to be intimidated by the many new laws introduced against them, such as those related to terrorism, immigration or by the raiding of their mosques and homes.

- 9.) To dignify and honour the Magnificent 19, who sacrificed their lives for Allah on 9/11.

- 10.) To expose the moderate *munafiqeen* (hypocrites) who start to cry for the British government, and yet claim they are defending Islam.

Support for extremism

As to the level of sympathy for extreme movements there is no robust evidence. Indicative evidence through opinion surveys of British Muslims in the 15 months following the September 11 attacks showed that they had a high rate of condemnation of the 11 September attacks, strong disapproval of the war in Afghanistan and sympathy for Muslim countries, strong support for a ban on religious discrimination, wide loyalty to the UK and mixed views on citizenship. The details were -

- a) between 35% and 70% thought the war on terrorism was a war on Islam, and up to 80% disapproved of the war in Afghanistan
- b) 67-85%% thought it would be wrong for terrorists to attack western targets, 80-85% thought the September 11 attacks were not justified and 61% thought it wrong for British Muslims to fight against allies in Afghanistan
- c) 75-87% felt loyal to Britain (67% felt patriotic), 41% felt Muslims needed to do more to integrate.
- d) young Muslims were far more likely than young Christians to regard religion as important to their self-identity (74% against 18%). The figures for young Sikhs and Hindus were also high (63% and 62%).

- e) young Muslims were more likely than other faith groups to think that the government was doing the right amount to protect people belonging to religions.

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The Hizb-ut-Tahrir conference 'British or Muslim' hoped to attract 20,000 people in 2003 (the actual attendance is estimated to be closer to 10,000). This represents less than one percent (0.6%) of the British Muslim population. And the Al Muhajiroun 2003 conferences 'the Magnificent 19' on September 11 were cancelled and the main conference in London was mainly attended by press with no supporters from the Muslim communities other than the organisers.

5 November 2003

PS/ Mr O'Brien

FCO UPDATE ON "BUILDING BRIDGES WITH MAINSTREAM ISLAM"

1. You will recall that Mr O'Brien agreed a number of submissions on strengthening our relationship with the British Muslim community, including the main strategy on 'building bridges with mainstream Islam'. Much of it is still work in progress: this is an update on where we are and what is ahead.
2. There has been a step change in our work with British Muslims. This is reflected above all in de-sensitising interaction with the FCO. Many mainstream organisations now feel more comfortable in engaging with us, and any previous stigma in doing so has been lessened. For example, we have managed to build working relationships with organisations that have previously been critical of us or have even declined to attend meetings. These include ISB, Q News, YMUK, FOSIS, etc. Even with regards to an organisation like the MCB, our relationship with them has perceptively changed, e.g. they are taking an active part in working with us on future activity, as well as positively reviewing our activities on the MCB Direct website.

3. The work already carried out, despite inevitable hindrances due to events in Iraq and Palestine includes:

- a) **Ministerial outreach** to British Muslim community organisations in London (pre and post Iraq), Birmingham and Bradford. In each case there has been growing interest from both the local and ethnic minority press.
- b) **'Think-again' CD-ROM-** this was an interactive 'one-stop shop' resource on the FCO and HMG's policies, for the Muslim community. It has been well received and we have extended the franchise to other communities.
- c) **Receptions-** these have been continued for both Eids, and are a way to provide access for members of the Muslim grassroots, to the FCO.
- d) **Regular Ministerial briefings with Muslim representatives-** the meetings are always well received as they are seen as a means of highlighting concerns at the highest level, and maintaining regular contact with the British Muslim communities. They tend to highlight the issues of the 'moment' amongst the Muslims. Our willingness to invite those who are publicly critical of HMG, has helped produce some change in perceptions of the FCO/HMG.
- e) **Engagement with Muslim youth-** This has included meetings with delegations from Muslim youth and student organisations, and Mr O'Brien's participation in debates on Iraq which had been organised on campus.

- f) **De-sensitising & Participation-** We have participated in some of the big Muslim community events/activities, e.g. MCB direct, EMEL, Islam Awareness Week, Living Islam 2003, Expo-Islamia, etc.
- g) **Promotion of Mainstream Islam-** We have started sponsorship and promotion of literature under the heading of 'Exploring Islam' (produced by the Institute for Islamic Dawah and Research), which was launched in Islam Awareness Week. The idea is to promote understanding of issues such as Islam and democracy. We have also assisted the CLU and the FCO Hajj Delegation in re-vamping the image of the Delegation (i.e. through its literature and communication resources)

4. There are a number of actions pending which have been agreed by Mr O'Brien. Future planned actions include:

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- a) As a follow-up to Fraser's minute of 6 October to Heads of departments, on linking generic outreach with the specific activities of FCO depts, we will be meeting soon with NENAD, MED, AD (E), CTPD, Consular, SAD and SEAD.
- b) We will continue to co-ordinate closely with the Home Office on issues of mutual interest with regards to building bridges with mainstream Islam, as well as wider outreach.
- c) **Focus groups:** This will concentrate on the generational differences within the British Muslim community on foreign policy issues. We will also attempt to conduct these amongst the different Muslim ethnic groups. We are trying to carry this out in co-operation with the HO and BC.
- d) **Direct Promotion:** As agreed by Mr O'Brien, we will send a revised version of the FCO 'Muslims in Britain' booklet (in conjunction with MCB) to 15,000 British Muslim households, as a pilot run. There is the

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} potential of up to 400,000 households if the pilot test proves to be successful.

- x } e) **Research on British Muslim youth and extremism:** PaNDU commissioned research on this issue, which includes data from 'defectors' from extremist organisations. I will submit on this soon, and it will also feed into the HO/FCO paper on this issue to the PM (as agreed by the Foreign Secretary and the Home Secretary).
- f) **Mainstream Imams:** This will focus on the issue of Imams and extremism, and will include (as agreed) a Ministerial visit to the Islamic Foundation and a seminar with British Imams.
- g) **New Focus: Islam & Europe:** I have already minuted on this issue. The activities will involve amongst other things, informing EU Embassies of our work with British Muslims, and a Europe and Islam seminar.
- h) **Communications:** This will include customised resources for British Muslims (booklet, video and revised CD-ROM).
- i) **Outreach:** In addition to the proposed cities for wider outreach seminars- (Fraser's minute of 4 November) where possible, we will try to include visits to various organisations, including those which are specifically Muslim- I would recommend that the Minister also visit Tower Hamlets (London), Leicester and Slough. These areas have some of the highest concentrations of Muslims in the UK.
- ✓ } j) **Promotion of Mainstream Islam:** We are sponsoring the creation of a new award (Ibn Khaldun award for excellence in promoting understanding between global cultures/faiths) for the annual Muslim News Awards, which will take place in March. We will also support the production of literature promoting mainstream Islam, a series of public lectures (in partnership with a mainstream organisation) and a FCO symposium on the issue.

k) **Engagement with Muslim youth:** In addition to including youth organisations to Mr O'Brien's outreach programmes, we will assist Muslim student organisations co-organise a seminar with their Jewish counterparts at the NUS conference, on international issues.

l) **Engagement with new interlocutors:** There are a number of new individuals/organisations who are influential amongst British Muslims. These include; Amr Khaled (a moderate and extremely popular lay preacher from Egypt, who is based for the immediate future in the UK and also has a large following amongst British Arabs) and the Muslim Public Affairs Committee (MPAC). We are in the process of forming relationships with these individuals/groups. However, it would be useful for the Minister to meet them.

6. In addition to the priority work with British Muslims as outlined above, we are balancing it with our other engagement. We have a 10-point action plan on engaging with Ethnic Minorities, which is nearing completion (and the Minister has agreed to host a reception in February to mark it). Also as a result of Multi-Faith week, the seminar in particular, we are working on an action plan for Faith Communities, which we will be submit on once we finish consulting people at the seminar.