



You ONLY have the Right to Silence

A Briefing on the Concerns regarding Muslims on Campus in Britain

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Islamic Human Rights Commission
PO Box 598
Wembley
HA9 7XH
T 020 8904 4222
F 020 8904 5183
E info@ihrc.org
W www.ihrc.org.uk

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Foreword

In a post the post 7-7 era, pressure on Muslims has increased in all spheres of life. One such area that has come under the new banner of ‘education and extremism’ is the life of Muslim students in British universities.

A nefarious link has been made between the gaining of tertiary education by Muslims, their social and political activism on campus and a threat to homeland security. The resulting security discourse resounds with calls for clampdowns on Muslims students and academic freedom.

This briefing seeks to explore some of the contentions made as a prelude to serious structured work on the issue – work that this report contends needs to be conducted with greater academic rigour than has been seen hitherto. Many of the justifications used for interference on campus emanate from the Glee / Pope report, the methodology of which is seriously called into question. As the following shows any number of counter arguments can be made using the same methodology.

What is required is serious academic study and debate, not a devaluation of these processes as a precursor to terrorism.

Islamic Human Rights Commission

Introduction

On 15 September 2005, the Education Secretary Ruth Kelly told a conference of university vice-chancellors and principals to spy on student activists to prevent the spread of Islamist extremism and terror.¹ Speaking at the annual conference of Universities UK, Ms Kelly said that vice-chancellors had a duty to inform the police where they believed that students or staff were breaking the law or committing “possible criminal acts” and that freedom of speech and thought on campus did not extend to tolerance of unacceptable behaviour.

The very same day, a right-wing think tank, the Social Affairs Unit, released a report warning that some British universities “may have become, and may still be, safe havens for terrorist ideas and recruits.”² The authors, Anthony Glees and Chris Pope, claimed that a thread linking many of the British terrorists “about whom we know something” was that they had spent time at a British university.

In a manner eerily reminiscent of the shameful era of McCarthyism, Muslim students at university have all come to be regarded as potential “fifth columnists.” Traditionally, university has been associated with freedom of thought and exchange of academic ideas. It is a place for debate and development. Unfortunately, in the post 7-7 world, it is rapidly developing into an arena of censorship, intolerance and thought control. This frenzied hunt to root out “extremists” on campus has not only been endorsed, but actively encouraged, by the government. That the Education Secretary’s advice to vice-chancellors to spy on students came on the very day the Social Affairs Unit report on campus extremism was released further strengthens the public perception that Ms Kelly was not basing her statements on any substantial intelligence or information she had but on a report which lacks any serious academic research and is a glorified reproduction of prejudiced and often false statements from the tabloid press designed to create a climate of fear and intolerance. As a self-professed member of the Catholic sect *Opus Dei*, Ms Kelly should surely be more cautious over endorsing the mass media’s definition of “extremism”.

Indeed so reactionary has been the government’s response to the London bombings that it is on the verge of introducing new legislation which could potentially make it a terrorist offence for academics to lecture in certain political fields or for librarians to hand out specific books and articles which could be interpreted as “glorifying” terrorism. For these reasons and more, the Terrorism Bill 2005 has been condemned outright, not just by civil libertarian groups and human rights activists, but also by the Association of University Teachers (AUT) and the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education (NATFHE) as an unjustified restriction on academic freedom.

A thorough analysis of the concerns regarding Muslim students on campus and the reasons behind them indicate three things. Firstly, that there is no substantial evidence to

¹ Speech to Universities UK conference in London, 15 September 2005

² Glees A. & Pope C., *When Students Turn to Terror: Terrorist and Extremist Activity on British Campuses*, (Social Affairs Unit; Sept 2005)

support the claims being made against Muslim students on campus. The reality is that the threat of terrorists on campus is wholly exaggerated and not based on any substantial evidence or research. A report by the Federation of Student Islamic Societies into the attitudes and perceptions of Muslim students following the London bombings found that the vast majority of Muslim students surveyed condemned the London bombings with only 4% not condemning the actions.³ Secondly, this entire debate is contaminated with intrinsic racism and Islamophobia, where those from a Muslim background are expected to react far more negatively to certain circumstances than those from non-Muslim backgrounds. For Muslims to hold certain political views are regarded as something sinister, even if those views are shared by others from other confessional backgrounds. Finally, the study shows that the events of 9-11 and 7-7 are being exploited and capitalized upon to silence any form of dissent or political activism on campus, specifically when Muslim students are involved and where the issue concerned is Palestine. Any expression of political activism is being tarnished with the label of “extremism” in a concerted effort to silence Muslim dissent. Indeed the definition of “extremism” given by the government in a report into Muslim youth is so broad as to include support for legitimate resistance groups fighting military occupation abroad in a manner entirely consistent with international law.⁴ By equating this with support for attacks such as those of 9/11 is to not only broaden and confuse the issue but to also make it very difficult for “extremism” as defined to be condemned. This has resulted in Islamophobic policies such as religious profiling and bans on religious clothing being implemented by universities in the name of security.

Political activism on campus is something to be endorsed and encouraged, not stifled and suppressed. By refusing to engage in any form of open political debate with those who hold differing opinions and to instead demonise both them and their beliefs through censorship, harassment and prosecution, is to follow in the footsteps of police states which do not tolerate dissent of any kind. This report contends that claims that such measures will enhance the public’s security are erroneous and if anything will lead to a climate of fear and the death of academic freedom, social activism and will increasingly diminish those liberties left in this country, as well as hasten the increasingly restrictive and discriminatory policy exclusion of Muslims.

³ *The voice of Muslim Students: A report into the attitudes and perceptions of Muslim students following the July 7th London attacks* (FOSIS: Aug. 2005)

⁴ “By extremism, we mean advocating or supporting views such as support for terrorist attacks against British or western targets, including the 9/11 attacks, or for British Muslims fighting against British and allied forces abroad, arguing that it is not possible to be Muslim and British, calling on Muslims to reject engagement with British society and politics, and advocating the creation of an Islamic state in Britain.”, *Young Muslims and Extremism*, (Home Office and Foreign & Commonwealth Office, 2004)

I. Extremism on Campus: Myth or Reality?

“NUS fears that the reports' unsubstantiated claims have the potential to endanger Muslim students by inflaming a climate of racism, fear and hostility, and place a cloud over perfectly legitimate student Islamic societies.”⁵

- NUS National President Kat Fletcher

On 15 September 2005, the right-wing think-tank, the Social Affairs Unit, released a report warning that some British universities “may have become, and may still be, safe havens for terrorist ideas and recruits.”⁶ The authors, Anthony Glees and Chris Pope, claimed that the liberal nature of Britain’s campuses had been and are being exploited by extremists of various kinds, primarily of the Muslim variety. Listing over twenty-three institutions where “extremist and/or terror groups” of an “Islamist” nature have been “detected”, the report alleges that universities, motivated by financial benefits, have naively welcomed all international students at the expense of domestic security.

The manner in which the report has been compiled is deeply worrying. Using a plethora of media sources, cut and pasted into numerous case studies, the report not only lacks substantive empirical research but is also submerged in blatant racism and Islamophobia. Out of the 195 citations in the report, over 100 i.e. over half, are derived from the media, as opposed to any independent academic enquiry or research. The majority of the report merely reproduces and reiterates media ‘facts’, even if they happen to be bias, inaccurate or simply irrelevant. The authors do concede that the information used in the report is ‘openly available in the media’ and by using such sources, they have identified a number of individuals and organisations that have attended or are using British higher education institutions for non-democratic or even illegal activities.⁷ Such a shallow level of research for something with the level of gravity as national security does is deeply troubling.

This methodology of combining biographical accounts from newspapers with inadequate primary data leads to a catch-all approach resulting in the report mentioning every Muslim mentioned in the media who happened to be a student suspected of extremist activity, even if they have never been charged or were in fact acquitted of all charges.

Of the many examples, the following are indicative of the problems with cases cited. Zeeshan Siddiqui, who is accused in the report of being linked to al-Qaeda after his arrest in Peshawar in May 2005, was completely acquitted in December 2005 of possessing false identity documents.⁸ Siddiqui was deported back to the UK in January 2006 after

⁵ ‘NUS Statement on Glees Report into extremism on campus’, <http://www.officeronline.co.uk/news/271354.aspx>

⁶ Glees A. & Pope C., *When Students Turn to Terror: Terrorist and Extremist Activity on British Campuses*, (Social Affairs Unit; Sept 2005)

⁷ *When Students Turn to Terror: Terrorist and Extremist Activity on British Campuses*,

⁸ ‘Forged ID Card: UK National Acquitted’, *Dawn*, 23 December 2005

being found guilty of overstaying his visa.⁹ His lawyer, Musarrat Hilali, claims Siddiqui apparently fell under suspicion initially because he had been in Peshawar with a group of Islamic preachers who travel from town to town teaching Islam, the Tablighi Jamaat, a group vehemently opposed to violence and totally apolitical. At no stage in his eight months of detention were terrorism charges ever brought against Siddiqui. All this seemed irrelevant to Pope and Glee who were more than happy to regurgitate a hyperbolic story published in the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Times* in the wake of the 7-7 bombings. That Siddiqui went to the same school as fellow Londoner Asif Haif, who carried out an attack in Israel, is also somehow used to condemn him.

“Other terrorists found on UK campuses”¹⁰ ‘exposed’ by Pope and Glee who were ultimately acquitted or had charges dropped against them include Tahira Tabassum¹¹, Zahid and Parveen Sharif,¹² Urslaan Khan¹³, and ex-Guantanamo detainee Feroz Abbasi. In the case of Tabassum, it is explicitly mentioned in the report that she was acquitted of all charges.¹⁴ Similarly, the report refers to Khan’s detention, imprisonment and ultimate release without charge from Iraq.¹⁵ One questions the need to refer to these cases at all. It is similar to writing a report about suspected IRA terrorists in Britain today and citing the Guildford Four and the Birmingham Six as supporting examples. Despite their innocence, they are still labelled as “terrorists”.

Pope and Glee are also careful to manipulate the facts to misrepresent the reality of the actual threat. Although they state that Feroz Abbasi was released upon his return to Britain as any confession obtained in Guantanamo Bay would be inadmissible, they rather conveniently omit the fact that Abbasi was held for three years without charge, that he has never been charged with any terror offences and that the reason any such confession would be inadmissible in a British court of law is because of the strong likelihood that it was obtained by torture.

Again, in the case of Babar Ahmad, Pope and Glee spell out the charges and allegations made against Ahmad without mentioning any evidence against him. A balanced academic report of any value would mention that under the Extradition Treaty 2003 (which is being used to extradite Ahmad to the US), Ahmad, a British citizen, is unable to challenge any evidence presented by the US authorities in a British court. Curiously, Pope and Glee found it worthwhile mentioning that this “committed Jihadist” stood as a candidate in the 2005 general election. It is unclear whether the authors intend an inference to be drawn that allowing democratic participation to all British citizens equally is inappropriate when dealing with Muslims, or whether they consider the democratic process itself to be a tool for so-called ‘Jihadists’ that needs reformation. Either contention is at best laughable.

⁹ ‘Zeeshan Siddiqui deported’, *Daily Times*, 11 January 2006

¹⁰ *When Students Turn to Terror: Terrorist and Extremist Activity on British Campuses*, p40

¹¹ ‘Suicide bomber wife cleared’, *BBC News Online*, 8 July 2004

¹² ‘UK suicide bomber family cleared’, *BBC News Online*, 28 November 2005

¹³ ‘How Briton’s £7 bus ticket to Baghdad turned dream pilgrimage into nightmare’, *Guardian*, 24 December 2003

¹⁴ *When Students Turn to Terror: Terrorist and Extremist Activity on British Campuses*, p40

¹⁵ *ibid*

With respect to the findings that approximately 30 university campuses are breeding grounds for terrorism, the report's methodology is just as shoddy. It is conducted on the basis of a total of 9 cited interviews – a member of the Special Branch; an elected student sabbatical at Brunel University; a member of the Socialist Society; the head of security at an unnamed British university; the managing director of resources at an unnamed British university; a member of the Community Security Trust; a former member of the BNP; Andi Ali (a PhD student at Newcastle University); and a member of the Union of Jewish Students (UJS).¹⁶ For example, the sources listed for naming University of Manchester in the report are 6 in total: 2 are un-sourced, 1 is from a Trotskyite website, 1 is from an interview with the UJS, 1 is from the Sunday Times, and 1 from Jane's Intelligence Review. That the singular primary source used in this specific example is that of the Community Security Trust¹⁷, a Zionist organization notorious for raising the banner of anti-Semitism in the face of every criticism of Israel¹⁸, the question of prejudice and bias does arise. It is questionable whether a report on Jewish student societies with its interview data from al-Muhajiroun would be tolerated and regarded as academic and factual.¹⁹

Another example is that of Cranford Community College, one of the institutes listed as having an extremist presence on campus. Cranford is actually a secondary school for 11-18 year olds. Yet another example of the shallowness of the authors' research is with regard to Dundee University. The only "proof" of extremism on Dundee University campus is a paragraph that informs that, "Suspected or confirmed terrorists who have studied in Britain in recent years include the lecturers Dr Azahari Husin, 45, who went to Reading University, and Shamsul Bahri Hussein, 36, who read applied mechanics at Dundee. They are wanted in connection with the Bali bombings in October 2002, when 202 people, including 26 Britons, died." The Sunday Times reported that Hussein did indeed study at Dundee during the 1980s. This is a rather tenuous link at best between

¹⁶ Renton, D. '18 October 2005: against Anthony Glees', 18 October 2005

¹⁷ See, *Muslim Profiling* (2002) IHRC, London, for an analysis of the CST's role in profiling opponents of Israel as Muslim and extremist at a demonstration in 2002.
http://www.ihrc.org.uk/file/02Aug22_Muslim%20Profiling.pdf

¹⁸ The Community Security Trust (CST) created to protect the Jewish community in Britain has come under sustained attack in recent months from a well-established figure in mainstream Jewish politics, Tony Lerman. Lerman, the incoming executive director of the think-tank Jewish Policy Research, has criticised the CST for exaggerating the extent of anti-Semitism in Britain and suggested that it has an institutional stake in making Jewish people scared.

Expanding on his views on BBC Radio Four's Sunday programme on 8 January 2006 in a discussion with Melanie Phillips, he further claimed that there was 'no tidal wave' of anti-Semitism from the Middle East. Lerman argues that a rise in anti-Jewish sentiment is largely due to resentment at Israeli policy towards the Palestinians. Phillips asserted that Muslims are by nature and tradition anti-Semites and proposed that the Jewish community should withhold funding from the JPR.¹⁸

The CST's alleged exaggeration of anti-Semitism and its stoking up of paranoia and hysteria in the Jewish community was also the subject of a BBC Radio 4 documentary in October 2005.

¹⁹ Ibid; Al-Muhajiroun are perceived by Jewish groups to be wholly anti-Semitic and thus any findings based on their information would generally be regarded as tainted with prejudice.

one man's student life in Dundee and his alleged involvement in terrorism over twenty years later.²⁰ Yet, Glees uses this as evidence to state that "Recruitment by extreme groups does go on at university, and that appears to have been the case here."²¹

Pope and Glees' report reads as if the Muslim voices that emerge towards the end of the report are cited on the basis of interviews by the report authors, particularly as quotes are presented directly from speakers, and not from the papers in which they were originally quoted. Of the interviews conducted with university students and staff, most are from Brunel, the institution at which both Pope and Glees are based. What is concerning about this is that the commentary that ensues from these Brunel based references are generalised as if indicative of UK campuses, when in reality information on other UK campuses are sought primarily from newspaper clippings and websites.

The authors write with a great degree of inaccuracy, hyperbole and plain scaremongering. Academic David Renton mentions a few examples such as the authors' contention that "the Baader-Meinhof Gang gained close to five million sympathizers, chiefly in West German universities". Renton contends that there are only two million students in the combined German university system today and points out that according to the US State Department and the Institute for Counter-Terrorism in Israel, the actual figure is more likely to be in the low hundreds.²²

Care must also be taken in figures coming from the German security services particularly with regard to "Islamic extremists". One member of the German security services claimed that there were an estimated 50,000 "Islamic extremists" in Berlin.²³ When questioned as to how they knew this, the officer stated that they had infiltrated the mosques and heard Muslim leaders advise the congregations "not to send their daughters to mixed swimming classes". According to this officer, to want single-sex swimming classes for females was to "hate our way of life" and fall within the ranks of the "extremists".

With such exaggerations and prejudices abounding amongst intelligence officers, the authors' credibility that there may be hundreds of thousands of potential terrorists within the Muslim community in Britain²⁴ comes into question.

²⁰ 'Dundee students refute extremism smear', *The i Witness*, 24 September 2005

²¹ 'Dundee Students Recruited by Terrorist Groups', *Sunday Times*, 18 September 2005

²² Renton, D. '18 October 2005: against Anthony Glees', 18 October 2005; for figures, see <http://www.hri.org/docs/USSD-Terror/95/append-b.html> and <http://www.ict.org.il/organizations/orgdet.cfm?orgid=35>

²³ Statement made under Chatham House Rules at meeting in London in July 2005

²⁴ *When Students Turn to Terror: Terrorist and Extremist Activity on British Campuses*, p16

CASE STUDY: Hizb ut-Tahrir

One Islamic group which has come in for particular negative attention at both a campus level as well as national level is Hizb ut-Tahrir. Although Hizb ut-Tahrir has been at odds with members of the Muslim community on various issues, it is universally recognized as a non-violent organization which has routinely condemned violence and acts of terrorism such as 9-11 and 7-7.

In spite of this, the National Union of Students passed a no-platform policy on Hizb ut-Tahrir which in effect bans the group from any kind of official student support or from campaigning in universities which implement the ban. Pope and Glees claim that the reasons behind the ban include Hizb ut-Tahrir's alleged involvement in the assassination of Egyptian president Anwar Sadat and because Hizb ut-Tahrir is anti-Hindu, anti-Sikh, anti-Semitic, homophobic and anti-feminist.²⁵ The report cites its sources for these as the Community Security Trust, discussed above, and academic, Farhad Khosrokhavar.²⁶ One must question the credibility of these sources. Sadat's assassin was proven to be Khalid Islambuli, a member of the Egyptian group Islamic Jihad. Islambuli was tried and executed for the killing. There has been no proven link between Hizb ut-Tahrir and Sadat's assassination. Also, none of the sources cited, neither the CST²⁷ nor Khosrokhavar, give their sources for describing Hizb ut-Tahrir's alleged intolerance of other faiths.

Moreover, the political beliefs of Hizb ut-Tahrir are shed in a sinister light by Pope and Glees such as its opposition to the Labour Party's War on Terror, the Conservative's immigration policies, Liberal Democrat leniency on drugs legislation and Respect's opposition to faith schools and its support of homosexuals as well as George Galloway's friendship with Saddam Hussein and his previous support for the communist Soviet Union. All of these are widely held and legitimate political opinions held by numerous individuals and groups within Britain and abroad of various and no confessional backgrounds. Pope and Glees seem to be suggesting that Muslims have the right to participate politically as long as they tow the line and support the three major political parties wholeheartedly. Dissent of any kind is not to be tolerated and demonized. It is worth noting that many of the dictatorial regimes opposed by Hizb ut-Tahrir, including Uzbekistan cite security reasons for their violent clampdown on opposition and the argument sused by Pope and Glees are often cited by such regimes.

Repeated attacks on Hizb ut-Tahrir have accelerated post 7-7. Despite condemning the attacks as having no justification whatsoever in Islam, the Prime Minister unequivocally stated that the government would ban Hizb ut-Tahrir in his infamous "the rules of the game have changed" speech.²⁸ Statements made by both the Prime Minister and the

²⁵ *When Students Turn to Terror: Terrorist and Extremist Activity on British Campuses*, p42

²⁶ Khosrokhavar, F., *Suicide Bombers: Allah's New Martyrs* (Pluto Press, 2005)

²⁷ Michael Whine of the CST makes the same allegations in his article 'The Mode of Operation of Hizb ut-Tahrir in an Open Society' 20 Feb 2004 but again without any sources or references for his contention. See <http://www.ict.org.il/articles/articledet.cfm?articleid=515>

²⁸ Prime Minister's Press Conference 5 August 2005

Home Secretary as well as other ministers and politicians suggest that it is not because of any alleged hatred of other religious groups that Hizb ut-Tahrir is accused of, but actually its ultimate political beliefs. Hizb ut-Tahrir's entire ideology is based around the non-violent overthrow of unelected dictatorial regimes and the uniting together of all Muslim countries under one political establishment - the Khilafa (Caliphate) - ruled by sharia law. This in itself is too much for the British government which has labelled it an "ideology of evil"²⁹ and has declared that "there can be no negotiation about the re-creation of the Caliphate; there can be no negotiation about the imposition of Sharia law"³⁰.

These statements about the Caliphate and Sharia betrays the government's deep-rooted phobia of political Islam. These are wholly legitimate political aspirations of those who seek it, as is any other political project as a matter of democratic right. Although other Muslim groups do not stress the importance of the Caliphate and Sharia law as intensively as Hizb ut-Tahrir, these are concepts rooted in the hearts of millions of Muslims throughout the world. Shariah, Islamic law, political Islam in its many guises and other forms of political theory and aspiration based on religious values are probably ideas that inform and are sought by the vast majority of Muslims throughout the world and not of a radical fringe minority. Blair's statements condemns them all as hate-filled and hateful, despite the fact that many support these ideas on the basis that they may bring better cohesion and harmony to diverse societies. Although elements of Islamic law may not be agreed upon by Western powers, if democracy is to have any meaning whatsoever, those who yearn for Islamic law in their countries should be entitled to work toward this.

Likewise, the desire to unite the Muslim nations under one Caliphate is also a legitimate aspiration of Muslims, and many have argued that Muslim nations have the right to form political unity in a similar fashion to how American states united to form the USA or how European nations united to create the EU. It may seem an idealistic concept but to condemn the desire of Muslims to have one legitimately elected leader is similar to condemn the Pope's position in the Catholic Church as an evil ideology that threatens the nation's security.

²⁹ "They demand the elimination of Israel; the withdrawal of all Westerners from Muslim countries, irrespective of the wishes of people and government; the establishment of effectively Taleban states and Sharia law in the Arab world en route to one caliphate of all Muslim nations." – Tony Blair's speech at the Labour Party national conference on 16 July 2005.

³⁰ Speech by Home Secretary at the Heritage Foundation in Washington DC on 5 October 2005 regarding the UK's approach to terrorism and extremism. The Home Office has not placed the speech on its website but has stated that copies are available from the Home Office Press Office. The full text of the speech can be found at <http://www.gnn.gov.uk/Content/Detail.asp?ReleaseID=172368&NewsAreaID=2&print=true>

II. Inherent Racism in the Debate

One of the most concerning aspects of the entire debate of Muslim “extremism” is that it has an inherently racist element within it which regards Muslims more far more likely to react negatively to any set of circumstances than non-Muslims in the same situation. This concept that somehow Muslims are programmed differently from others to make them more susceptible to violence than others can be gleaned from the various studies carried out by both academics and the government officials.

The argument is made that the British Muslims most prone to be drawn into extremism are of two types: “First, those who are well-educated with degrees or technical/professional qualifications, typically targeted by extremist recruits and organizations circulating on campuses and second, underachievers with few or no qualifications and often a non-terrorist criminal background, often drawn to mosques where they may be targeted by extremist preachers, or radicalized or converted in prison.”³¹ This gives the impression that Muslims, whether viciously downtrodden suffering from social and economic deprivation, imprisoned for criminal offences or upwardly mobile succeeding in university and professional lives, are all very likely to be drawn to extremism. This is a catch all as it implies that only ‘high class’ i.e. very few Muslims are not prone to turn to terrorism. Reminiscent of erstwhile bourgeois prejudice against the (white) working classes, and Marxist revulsion of petty bourgeois, these contentions are also damningly racist and Islamophobic and dangerous in its implications for social cohesion in that it legitimises the otherization of an entire minority community – a process that brings with it extreme discrimination and marginalisation, including violence against members of the minority by the majority.

As noted by FOSIS:

“the report further implies that Islamism is a form of extremism. It claims to “distinguish throughout between Islam and Islamic on the one hand, and Jihadism and Jihadist or Islamist on the other.” How ever the report authors fail to adhere to their own definitions. One of its named campuses, Durham, harbours extremists because, “Ramadan Shallah [currently under arrest in USA] studied for a PhD at Durham between 1985 and 1990 and wrote a thesis on Islamic banking in Jordan... **His thesis goes some way to portraying Shallah's extremist views. It calls for an “Islamisation” of financial institutions in Jordan, with a complete ban on paying or receiving interest, prohibited by Islamic law.**

“By this logic, both HSBC and Lloyds TSB should be branded extremist organisations because they too offer Islamic banking alternatives and interest-free Shariah-compliant finance. We would urge everyone to exercise caution in the use

³¹ *Young Muslims and Extremism* (2004) a paper presented for Prime Minister Blair and partly published in Sunday Times 10 July 2004

of ill-defined terms such as 'extremist' and 'Islamist' in order to avoid falling victim to the same mistakes as Professor Glees and his colleagues have."³²

The recommendations exemplify this racism and Islamophobia. Firstly, they argue that the security services need to begin to fight against, not only terrorism, but also "subversion", the precursor to terrorism. Their broad definition of "subversion" can be drawn from three diverse groups whom they accuse of being supportive of terrorism – Hizb ut-Tahrir, Al-Muhaajiroun, and the Muslim Public Affairs Committee UK (MPAC). The authors recommend that to counter these groups, plainclothes officers must be active on campus.

The bulk of the recommendations however are directed towards the university authorities who, it is claimed, are partially to blame for creating a highly liberal campus environment which has allowed extremism to flourish under the banner of sustaining freedom of speech and debate. The authors call for universities to work with MI5 to exclude potentially dangerous students by abolishing clearing procedures and instead interviewing, all students with the assistance of MI5. Pope and Glees also call for the banning of all faith societies, more security cameras, "proper screening to exclude dangerous students" (in fact, over the past 4 years, security services have barred over 200 foreign scientists from studying as British universities amid fears they could present a terrorist threat³³), and "direct links between university registrars and immigration officers at ports of entry". Most shocking of all is the recommendation to "ensure that the ethnic composition of any single university reflects, broadly, the ethnic mix of the UK as a whole." As one former trade union official for NATFHE observed, "The black and minority ethnic population of Britain stands at around 8 percent. Because this population is over-concentrated in one city (London) and in particular age groups, some universities have a majority of black students. For metropolitan universities with a black student population of 50 or 60 percent what does Glees propose: the physical removal of all those students who take the university above this 8 percent limit?"³⁴

Alleging that liberalness is part of the cause of the 'extremist problem' is an overstatement and fails to acknowledge some of the practices and policies in many Higher Education institutes which are very illiberal, racist, and a stifling of freedom of speech and expression. These include instances of university prayer rooms being taken away from students at the whim of the union or the university, religious clothing bans such as that on the niqab in Imperial College and on the jilbaab for nursing students in South Bank University, and the resistance against real and substantial Muslim participation in the Union electoral process, as outlined in the cases below.

CASE STUDY: 'The Birmingham 14'

³² An Open letter to the Guardian, the Times and Channel 4 News from FOSIS, 15 September 2005; <http://www.fosis.org.uk/sac/isocstatement.htm>

³³ 'Foreign scientists banned amid terror fears', *Guardian* 19 July 2005

³⁴ Renton, D. '18 October: against Anthony Glees', http://www.dkrenton.co.uk/glees_report.html

On 25 October 2004, fourteen students were elected to represent Birmingham University at the NUS Annual Conference in April 2005. All 14 of the elected delegates happened to be of Muslim origin. After much pressure from students affiliated to the campus Jewish Society³⁵, the Birmingham Guild of Students, supported by the University, annulled the elections, and on 3 November 2004 produced a report that made various allegations and accusations regarding these elections.

The allegations consisted of claims of improper electoral conduct which included ballot fraud, voter intimidation and campaigning in contravention of the Guild's anti-slate rules, which state that candidates are not allowed to stand as groups and therefore cannot back each other. Here, the allegation was that Muslim students were sent an email telling them who to vote for. To date, no such email has ever been produced.

As a result of the allegations a student politics website called the Run Down alleged ballot fraud, voter intimidation and other unsavoury campaigning tactics had been deployed by the candidates causing damage to their reputation and credibility.³⁶ On 3 November 2004 the candidates were told by the Student Union president that the matter had been referred to the University's Registrar for a final decision. None of the candidates was allowed to consider the evidence against them or to make representations. The Students' Union rules do not allow a right to appeal in this case and on 30 November 2004 a decision was taken confirming that the election was void and new elections were held during February 2005.

This was despite the fact that the candidates, the NUS Anti-Racism Officer, FOSIS and Black Human Rights Organisation the 1990 Trust had urged the University to reverse its decision. One of the 14, Arafat Ben Hassine said: "We had strongly urged the University to reverse its decision for the sake of fairness and clarity. We were the candidates duly elected by the students. Decisions should be based on hard evidence not malicious rumours."³⁷

In September 2005, the students instructed their solicitors to begin legal proceedings against the university on the grounds of racial and religious discrimination.³⁸

CASE STUDY: Imperial College Niqab Ban

In November 2005, Imperial College London issued a ban on staff and students wearing veils, hooded tops and other garments that obscured the wearer's face, as part of an effort to improve campus security after summer bombings in London.³⁹ The college policy

³⁵ Those who made complaints were also senior members of the Union of Jewish Students; Interview with Birmingham student on condition of anonymity;

³⁶ 'Vote fraud hits Birmingham NUS elections', *the Rundown*, 1 November 2004

³⁷ 'Birmingham University accused of discrimination', *Guardian*, 23 September 2005

³⁸ 'Muslim students allege religious discrimination', *Guardian*, 27 September 2005

³⁹ 'Imperial bans hoodies on campus', *Guardian*, 23 November 2005

claimed to allow for religious freedom stating “if the college’s dress code produces a conflict with an individual’s religious belief, the individual’s line manager or the student’s supervisor will, with the aim of finding a satisfactory compromise, sympathetically consider the issue.” Showing the far-reaching implications of the policy, it was condemned outright by a number of diverse groups including the Federation of Student Islamic Societies (FOSIS), the National Union of Students (NUS), the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education (NATFHE), Liberty and the Muslim Association of Britain. The College never consulted with the Islamic Society or FOSIS or any Muslim students prior to introducing the ban and has since refused to enter into any discussions.⁴⁰

The ban came shortly after Muslim students and staff at Imperial College had their weekly allocated location for Friday prayers taken away, without a permanent alternative being provided.

Such policies only create the atmosphere in which racist and Islamophobic attitudes are allowed to fester and thrive. By openly stating that religious dress such as the niqab constitutes a security threat, the university is endorsing and lending legitimacy to the views of racist parties such as the BNP. The Education Secretary Ruth Kelly showed her support for such Islamophobic policies when she decided to back the appeal of a school found guilty of discriminating against High School student Shabina Begum by refusing to allow her to wear the *jilbab*.⁴¹

One student in the College of Law stated that one of his lecturers had once told him that “if Muslims don’t like this country, they can go back to their own” and had accused Muslims of forcing “your women wear the headscarf, then the veil, then marry them off to their cousins in Pakistan.” When it was put to her that many Muslim women wore the hijab out of choice, she argued that it was because they were “brainwashed since childhood into thinking that they would not get married unless they wore it.” After the student pointed out that many wore hijab against their parents wishes, his lecturer claimed that “they do it to make a political statement and show their sympathy with the extremists.”⁴²

That Islamic dress can be seen as something to be feared and associated with extremism is indeed a very worrying phenomenon. If a Muslim’s visible identification of herself as a Muslim is perceived as a threat to others⁴³, and if the presence of Muslims on campus is deemed threatening, then the very existence of Muslims, it can be inferred, will be or is already being seen as a threat amongst the majority and not only in right wing movements .

⁴⁰ Statement by FOSIS, 13 January 2006 http://www.fosis.org.uk/committees/media/imperial_2.html

⁴¹ ‘Minister backs school hijab appeal’, *Times Online* 30 July 2005

⁴² Interview with a student at College of Law in November 2005

⁴³ see Ameli S.R., and Merali, *Hijab: Meaning, Identity, Otherization and Politics- British Muslim Women* (January 2006) on British Muslim women’s experiences and expectations

III. Palestine

Arguably the single most controversial and divisive issue on university campuses for the last few decades has been the question of Palestine. Nothing has proven as problematic as the conflict in the Middle East and its spill over effect onto campuses throughout Britain. Pro-Israeli factions such as the Union of Jewish Students, the Community Security Trust and senior academics claim that students sympathizing with the Palestinians have exploited the conflict to spread anti-Semitism on campus. This anti-Semitism, they claim, is often coated in the language of anti-Israeli and anti-Zionist propaganda and is only one element of a far more dangerous extremism, often the precursor for violent terrorism. On the other hand, proponents of Palestinian independence argue that the cry of “anti-Semitism” is often used as a stick to beat down any criticism of Israel or the ideology upon which it was founded, Zionism. It is student activism and campaigning on the issue of Palestine that has most frequently been stigmatized with the label of extremism.

CASE STUDY: School of Oriental and African Studies

No university has been singled out and accused of encouraging anti-Semitism more than the University of London’s School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS). In May 2005, a dossier of evidence documenting alleged instances of anti-Semitic behaviour at SOAS was delivered by the Board of Deputies of British Jews to Professor Colin Bundy, the head of the school. In March 2005, *the Times* reported that Hazel Blears, Minister for Crime Reduction, Policing, Community Safety and Counter Terrorism, had ordered a report into activities at SOAS.⁴⁴ (The veracity if this report is unclear and it is claimed that Ms Blears subsequently stated to the College that she was merely responding to a question at a Home Affairs Committee meeting⁴⁵ and that her intention “was not to call for a Home Office led investigation.”)⁴⁶

The Student Union officially considers Zionism as a form of racism. Inspired by the UN’s resolution of 1975, several years ago, it passed a motion stating that peace requires the elimination of Zionism and racial discrimination in all its forms, and condemning any form of Zionism on campus. The consequences of this motion meant that for many years there was no Israel Society on campus as it would be definition, be a racist society. In 2005, the college administration forced the Union to allow the first-ever SOAS Israel Society, though the “Zionism is racism” motion still stands as policy.

The dossier contained a number of incidents.⁴⁷ In November 2004, the school hosted an international conference regarding the academic boycott of Israel called “Resisting Israeli Apartheid.”⁴⁸

⁴⁴ ‘Tide of extremism is rising against us, say Jewish students’, *The Times*, 12 March 2005

⁴⁵ Select Committee on Home Affairs Minutes of Evidence, Examination of Witnesses (Questions 500-519), 1 March 2005.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200405/cmselect/cmhaff/165/5030104.htm>

⁴⁶ <http://www.ummah.com/forum/showthread.php?t=54764>

⁴⁷ ‘SOAS faces action over alleged anti-semitism’, *Guardian*, 12 May 2005

⁴⁸ ‘Israel boycott row hits college’ *Guardian*, 4 December 2004

In February 2005, the Student Union attempted to bar Israeli Embassy official Roey Gilad from addressing a Jewish society event. The decision was eventually overturned by the college administration.⁴⁹ The contrast in the reaction to Gilad being barred with that when the leader of the British National Party, Nick Griffin was uninvited by St Andrews University just one month earlier is remarkable. Griffin had been invited by members of St Andrews University Debating Society to take part in a debate on the shortcomings of multiculturalism.⁵⁰ Students at the university were forced to withdraw their invitation to him after a protest. The student who brought the motion against Gilad, Jamal el-Shayyal, stated his motivations to the *Guardian* newspaper: "St Andrews University had to uninvite Nick Griffin and there was no talk about that being undemocratic. St Andrews classified him as a racist; we classify this person as a racist."⁵¹

In March 2005, the Palestine Society invited anti-Zionist speaker Gilad Atzmon, a former Israeli who now lives in the UK, to speak on campus. He is reported to have said that the burning down of synagogues must be viewed as rational and political act against perceived Jewish and Zionist control in the world. John Game, an academic at SOAS, helped shed some light on the statement in an article published in the student magazine *Spirit*: "Taken in its actual context, the quote represented an argument which suggested that Judaism should not be equated with Zionism, and that this was important because Jewish people should not be blamed for Israeli policies just because they were Jewish. This seems entirely unexceptional and it's impossible to imagine any union condemning such a sentiment."⁵²

In March 2005, Mayor of London Ken Livingstone was elected the Student Union's first ever honorary president. This followed weeks of controversy with Zionist groups accusing the Student Union and Ken Livingstone of anti-Semitism. This stemmed from two sets of comments made by Livingstone. Firstly, he referred to a Jewish reporter for the *Evening Standard* newspaper as a Nazi concentration camp guard. Secondly, he claimed in the *Guardian* newspaper that Israel had ethnically cleansed the Palestinians in 1948, and that Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon was a war criminal. Later that month, the university once again intervened in the Union's affairs and overturned the motion.⁵³

CASE STUDY: Nasser Amin

In March 2005, a Muslim student at SOAS, Nasser Amin, wrote an article in the student magazine *Spirit* in which he discussed the morality of Palestinian resistance against Israeli occupation. The article, '*When Only Violence Will Do*', was a response to views expressed by Sheykh Hamza Yusuf, former advisor to US president George W. Bush, that violence was not the answer for the oppressed Palestinians. The article describes the

⁴⁹ 'College tells students to reverse Israeli ban', *Guardian*, 5 February 2005

⁵⁰ 'College tells students to reverse Israeli ban', *Guardian*, 5 February 2005

⁵¹ 'Minds wide open', *Guardian*, 15 February 2005

⁵² http://blogs.guardian.co.uk/culturevulture/archives/2005/10/13/found_in_translation.html

⁵³ 'Tide of extremism is rising against us, say Jewish students', *The Times*, 12 March 2005

whole of Israel as a Jewish colony that should be dismantled and calls on Palestinians to violently resist Israeli oppression.

Amin's article faced repeated accusations in national newspapers of being anti-Semitic and supportive of terrorism.⁵⁴ Calls were also made by journalists and also in parliament for him to be prosecuted⁵⁵ and he became the subject of numerous death threats on Zionist websites⁵⁶. The legal threats came to nothing since Amin had not breached any laws in his article. Amin was however publicly reprimanded by SOAS without any formal disciplinary hearing⁵⁷. Amin's views are not unique and are shared by numerous students, activists and academics coming from a diversity of religious and cultural backgrounds.⁵⁸ Senior politics academic at SOAS, Dr Mark Laffey, criticized the decision to reprimand stating that "it is part of the job description of an academic institution that you are willing to give offense. Our job is to seek the truth, no matter how uncomfortable or unpleasant for various groups or interests ...freedom of expression must include the right to air unpopular or unpleasant arguments."⁵⁹

Amin claimed that SOAS's reprimand against him was unlawful since he had been denied due process and the right to defend himself against the charge. Moreover, he said that he had not been informed by the School of the reprimand posted on the SOAS website. Contrast this with Director of SOAS Colin Bundy's jump to defend the academic freedom of Dr Shirin Akiner, a lecturer at SOAS who justified the Uzbekistan regime's massacre of hundreds of peaceful protestors in Andijan on 13 May 2005.⁶⁰

Despite the fact that in all of the above cases it was Zionism and Israel which were under attack, Danny Stone of the Union of Jewish Students accused the Student Union of being "unaccountable and undemocratic", of misrepresenting Jewish students and of being "complicit in the tensions that Jewish students are coming over."⁶¹ This deliberate misrepresentation of political activism as anti-Semitic extremism is a phenomenon which is not unique to campus.

⁵⁴ See for example, 'Tide of extremism is rising against us, say Jewish students', *The Times*, 12 March 2005

⁵⁵ Phillips, M., 'Jihad at the School of Orchestrated Anti-Semitism', 10 March 2005, <http://www.melaniephillips.com/diary/archives/001087.html> ; Question by David Winnick MP to the Solicitor-General, Hansard Column 532W, 21 March 2005, <http://www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/cm200405/cmhansrd/cm050321/text/50321w03.htm>

⁵⁶ For example, see <http://littlegreenfootballs.com/weblog/?entry=15018#comments>

⁵⁷ Statement by SOAS Directorate on Allegations of Anti-Semitism at SOAS <http://www.soas.ac.uk/departments/index.cfm?navid=2455>

⁵⁸ For example, Professor Ten Honderich from University College London.

⁵⁹ 'Does freedom of speech only apply to non-Muslims?', *The Muslim Weekly*, 6 July 2005

⁶⁰ In an interview on Uzbek television, Dr. Akiner supports the government's version of events saying, "These people were not peaceful demonstrators, these were rebels, they were armed. On the square there were no protests or demands from the local people, there were just some people who stood and watched what happened." Uzbek Television and Radio Company, "Akhborot" (News), May 29, 2005, online at <http://www.teleradio.uz/archive.php?Lang=ru> (retrieved August 24, 2005. This broadcast was subsequently removed from the Uzbek Television and Radio Company website. It is on file with Human Rights Watch). See Human Rights Watch, *Burying the Truth: Uzbekistan Rewrites the Story of the Andijan Massacre* (September 2005)

⁶¹ 'London School Hotbed of Anti-Israel Rhetoric', *Jewish Telegraph Agency*, 21 March 2005

This equation of anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism and extremism is also visible in the treatment of Professor Tariq Ramadan.

CASE STUDY: Tariq Ramadan

Tariq Ramadan is a respected figure in both the Muslim and academic worlds. He is the author of numerous books and articles, most recently *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam*, published by Oxford University Press. He also serves as expert on various committees linked to the European Parliament. John Esposito, a leading US specialist in the field of Islamic studies, has described Ramadan as “an established academic ... with a strong record”⁶² while Madeline Bunting referred to him as “one of the foremost thinkers on Islam in Europe”⁶³. He was also named as one of the 100 most influential thinkers in the world by *Time* magazine.

On 5 October 2004, Alliance for Workers’ Liberty (AWL) supporter Alan Clarke persuaded the National Executive Committee of the NUS to adopt a resolution calling for Tariq Ramadan to be banned from speaking at the European Social Forum, which was to be held in London later that month. Subsequently, a majority of the NUS NEC raised concerns that the motion was passed without a fully-informed debate, and requested that the motion not be acted upon, and this was accepted. On 6 December 2004, the NUS NEC voted to formally overturn the decision. Its statement recognized that the allegations made against Ramadan were “baseless and completely misrepresent Tariq Ramadan’s views.”⁶⁴

In describing Ramadan as a “soft-sell version of Islamism”⁶⁵, Clarke presented a number of accusations against Ramadan. As with previous allegations made against Ramadan, they were entirely without foundation and basis. The two main accusations were, first, that Ramadan “defends the application of sharia law in majority-Muslim areas, in which women, LGBT people and those who wish to convert from Islam are denied basic human rights”; and secondly, that he “defends conjugal violence as ‘a last resort’”. Both these allegations were sufficiently refuted by NUS NEC members Peter Leary, Pav Akhtar and Tom Whittaker.⁶⁶ Using Ramadan’s own writings and interviews as their primary source of information, the document provides evidence of Ramadan’s rejection of the sharia as a repressive state-imposed legal system and his public condemnation of the prosecution and imprisonment of gay men by the Mubarak government in Egypt. Also quoted is Ramadan’s statement in a televised debate with French Interior Minister, Nicolas Sarkozy, that “my position is extremely clear, conjugal violence and violence towards a woman is unacceptable under Islam, that is what I say, and I say it forcefully.”⁶⁷

⁶² ‘Muslim scholar has visa required’, *Chicago Tribune*, 24 August 2004

⁶³ ‘Muslims urged to embrace their role in the west’, *Guardian*, 16 October 2004

⁶⁴ ‘NUS congratulated for defending Muslim participation’, *NUS Press Release* 6 December 2004

⁶⁵ Alan Clarke, Notes on NUS, Tariq Ramadan and the ESF (NUS National Executive) 10 October 2004

⁶⁶ ‘Why NUS was correct not to implement the decision of the previous NUS NEC’, Motion Reviewing NUS’ decision on Tariq Ramadan;

<http://resource.nusonline.co.uk/media/resource/peter%20leary%20motion.doc>

⁶⁷ A transcript of the interview can be found online at

http://perso.wanadoo.fr/mivy/linfo/sarkoshow/integral_s_r.htm

As FOSIS Executive member Jamal El-Shayyal stated, “If anyone of these people was to read one chapter of Ramadan’s [book] ‘To be a European Muslim’ they would see that any of the accusations levelled against him are not only false but ludicrous.”⁶⁸ Even the Jewish Council for Racial Equality came out publicly defending Ramadan after *The Sun* ran a front page article against Ramadan on his appointment to a government taskforce in the aftermath of the London bombings.⁶⁹ Yet Ramadan has been criminalized and persecuted, not because of his moderate beliefs, but because of his opposition to Zionism and Israel.

The effects of the clampdown of any form of student activism has made it virtually impossible to distinguish between genuine political activists and violent elements within the Muslim community. A programme of religious profiling is in operation whereby Muslims who have participated in any demonstrations, debates or actions against Zionism or other unjust policies find themselves being persecuted. For example, on 18 December 2005, the President of the Federation of Student Islamic Societies (FOSIS), Wakkas Khan, was detained for four hours at LA International airport on his way to speak at a conference on combating extremism within the Islamic community.⁷⁰ As a result of his detention, Khan missed the event, organized by the Muslim Public Affairs Council. To many, Khan is a moderate Muslim who was hand-picked by Tony Blair to be part of a taskforce to counter extremism in the wake of the London bombings. Yet Khan’s previous actions in challenging Zionism at the University of Manchester may have come back to haunt him.

⁶⁸ ‘Student leaders branded ‘Islamophobic’, *blink*, 6 October 2004

⁶⁹ ‘Straight Talk’, *Guardian*, 2 September 2005

⁷⁰ ‘UK Muslims held at US customs, forced to miss conference’, *Yahoo News*, 18 December 2005

IV. “McBlairism”

As the clampdown on Muslim student activism continues in the name of fighting extremism, we are inevitably going to witness the suppression of dissent from non-Muslim voices who dare to stand up for Muslims. The first sign of this new policy of *McBlairism* was witnessed at Middlesex University in September 2005. Hizb-ut-Tahrir had been invited by the Student Union of Middlesex University to take part in a Question & Answer meeting on 28 September 2005. On 19 September 2005, the Vice Chancellor of the University, Professor Michael Driscoll, ordered the Student Union to cancel the invitation to Hizb ut-Tahrir due to its “extremist views”. The University stated that it “does not rule out entirely that Hizb ut-Tahrir might be invited to take part in a debate in the future, but would only agree to this happening if it could be assured that the unproscribed Hizb ut-Tahrir were now a moderate organization operating within the law and rejecting extremist views.”⁷¹ It is beyond belief that a university authority will now take it upon itself to decide what is “extreme” and what is “moderate” in a field where ideas are supposed to be freely debated and dissected.

After the Student Union refused to cancel the event, the university informed them that it would not permit the event to take place on university premises. Consequently, the SU chose to move the event to the SU building only to be told that if it did not cancel the invitation, the meeting would be “banned”. Student Union President Keith Shilson refused to cancel the invitation arguing that it should be allowed on the ground of freedom of speech. This refusal resulted in Mr Shilson being suspended from the university, having his studentship revoked indefinitely and being escorted from campus by university security. Only after issuing a full apology and agreeing not to invite such “controversial” speakers again was Mr Shilson reinstated 10 days later.

Hizb ut-Tahrir is an Islamic political group which does not espouse violence as a methodology of social change. Despite intense persecution of its members throughout the Muslim and Arab world, it has never called for violence, even in self-defence. It has not yet been banned by the government or on campus in Middlesex University. Keith Shilson is the President of the Middlesex University Student Union. Neither is he a Muslim nor does he share any of the beliefs or goals of Hizb ut-Tahrir. Yet bizarrely, in upholding the freedom of speech of this non-violent Muslim group, this non-Muslim was punished by his university.

It is clear that the Vice Chancellor, Professor Michael Driscoll, was in all likelihood acting in response to Education Secretary Ruth Kelly’s request to crackdown on extremism on campus. By succumbing to government pressure without even defining the term “extremism”, Professor Driscoll has compromised the integrity and independence of Middlesex University.

⁷¹ Statement issued by Middlesex University 19 September 2005, <http://www.mdx.ac.uk/news/hizbuttahrir.htm>

Furthermore, in December 2005, 2 students (Assed Baig and Darrell Williams) at Matthew Boulton College in Birmingham were apprehended by security guards and indefinitely suspended by the college for distributing a pamphlet criticising some of the college's policies, including its ban on religious societies.⁷²

The full extent of this *McBlairism* is evidenced by the fact that in May 2005 (prior to the London bombings) members of the Special Branch approached the University Registrar and Secretary at Birmingham University and requested a list of all the members of the university Islamic Society. The request was passed on to the Guild of Students which, after taking legal advice, refused to give the information.⁷³ Since 9-11 and to a greater extent, since 7-7, the Islamic Human Rights Commission has received numerous reports from students of having been approached by Special Branch and requested to work for them. These students have invariably been involved in the campus Islamic Society or other political societies. One student who holds a very senior position in a mainstream Islamic Society told IHRC how Special Branch showed her statements made in private meetings by other members of the Islamic Society and photographs of her at certain events and demonstrations on campus among other things, in their attempt to persuade her to join them.⁷⁴

Following the calls on university registrars by Education Secretary Ruth Kelly⁷⁵ and Higher Education Minister Bill Rammell⁷⁶ to crack down on “extremism” and spy on students, it can be expected that more and more Muslim students will become victims of harassment by Special Branch. The creation of CampusWatch by the Metropolitan Police Service⁷⁷, a scheme to have students and staff act as special constables on campus, will only make matters worse and lead to fewer Muslim students becoming involved in the Islamic Society, the Student Union, or indeed any political society. Many academics have recognized this possibility and have criticized Ms Kelly for her comments. For example, Dr Sophie Gilliat-Ray from Cardiff University stated that it was not academics’ duty to act as “the policemen of the university.”⁷⁸

⁷² ‘Students Suspended for Criticising College’, *NUS*

News, <http://www.officeronline.co.uk/news/271819.aspx> accessed 9 January 2006

⁷³ Interview with Sue Blackwell, academic at University of Birmingham (October 2005)

⁷⁴ Interview with student, (August 2005)

⁷⁵ Speech to Universities UK conference in London, 15 September 2005

⁷⁶ ‘Minister urges action on campus extremism’, *Guardian*, 20 July 2005

⁷⁷ ‘Is it the end of an era?’, *Eastern Eye*, 23 September 2005

⁷⁸ ‘Islam expert attacks ‘root out extremists’ call’, *icWales* 20 September 2005

V. Terrorism Bill 2005

On 13 October 2005, the government published the final version of the Terrorism Bill which will attempt to bring into law numerous proposals mentioned by the Prime Minister and the Home Secretary over the past twelve months and in particular, since the London bombings. The proposed offences which are of particular relevance to university campuses and which may cause most consternation not only to students, but also to university staff, are those which create new offences of encouragement and glorification of terrorism, dissemination of terrorist publications and training for terrorism. Curiously, Pope and Glees recommend a careful scrutiny of the content of courses being taught to test whether they appear to extol or glorify violent revolution.⁷⁹

It is important to note that the definition of “terrorism” is incorporated from the Terrorism Act 2000, a very broad and vague definition which potentially outlaws any form of political activism: “For the purpose of advancing a political, religious or ideological cause”, the use of threat of action “designed to influence a government or to intimidate the public or a section of the public” which involves any violence against any person or serious damage to property, endangers the life of any person, or “creates a serious risk to the health or safety of the public or a section of the public, or is designed seriously to interfere with or seriously to disrupt an electronic system.”⁸⁰ Neither the “public” nor the “government” need necessarily be British – it may be the public of any country or the government of any country. There is no requirement that the government need be a democratic one. Even lawful political movements aimed at overthrowing brutal dictatorial regimes such as that of Muhammad Qadhafi and Robert Mugabe could come within the definition.⁸¹

The Association of University Teachers (AUT) and NATFHE have come out in opposition to the Terrorism Bill out of fear that it will criminalize entirely legitimate forms of academic enquiry.⁸²

Encouragement of Terrorism

Its objection to the proposed offence of “encouragement of terrorism” which includes “glorification” of previous acts of terrorism is that it would severely restrict the “legitimate study of controversial historical events, terrorist activity, the motivation of those who use terrorist means and the use of violence for political ends” during which “students are required to read, listen to or watch texts and statements that do indeed glorify terrorism or could be seen to encourage it.” This would mean that a lecturer would commit an offence if he/she had reasonable grounds to believe that a student was “likely to understand it as a direct or indirect encouragement or other inducement to the commission, preparation or instigation of acts of terrorism or Convention offences.” “In

⁷⁹ *When Students Turn to Terror: Terrorist and Extremist Activity on British Campuses*

⁸⁰ Terrorism Act 2000, section 1(1)

⁸¹ For further information, see Ansari F., *British Anti-Terrorism: A Modern Day Witch-hunt*, (Islamic Human Rights Commission; November 2005)

⁸² Association of University Teachers, *The Terrorism Bill and Academic Freedom*, November 2005

other words the lecturer does not have to think one of their students is a terrorist themselves, only that one of his students may interpret what they are saying as being an encouragement to terrorism.”

Dissemination of Terrorist Publications

The offence will be one of publishing and possessing for distribution of publications that indirectly incite terrorist acts through glorification or are likely to be useful to a person committing or preparing an act of terrorism. In the context of the anti-terror legislation as a whole, this clause is extremely frightening.

The AUT has also expressed its deep concerns that such an offence would have grave repercussions for academic freedom and debate, with lecturers risking prosecution even if their intentions were utterly benign. “Such a situation could arise through the handing out of primary or secondary source materials which themselves constitute encouragements to terrorism. Likewise the reproduction of such materials in a research paper or dissertation could again fall foul of the legislation. And finally, the librarians who stock and lend such books or materials would also be open to prosecution.

Training for Terrorism

The teaching of science would be severely effected as the offence outlaws any instruction or training in the handling of noxious substances if the person “knows or suspects” that the student might use the skills for terrorism. The AUT quite rightly has stated that it cannot begin to implement a policy whereby university lecturers would refuse to teach individual students based on their “suspicion” that many years down the line, that particular student may use his skills for the purposes of terrorism. The AUT is resolute that it will not be used to spy on its students under the threat of prosecution.⁸³

There is not a shadow of a doubt that these offences, if introduced, will lead to a wide range of politically-motivated investigations and arrests, not only of students but also of lecturers. A culture of suspicion will be introduced on campuses whereby lecturers will be reluctant to teach students from specific backgrounds for fear that they may fall foul of the provisions. The AUT recognizes that this is most likely to affect “black and minority ethnic staff and students, especially those from a Muslim background.”⁸⁴

We have seen how the issue of Palestine and anti-Zionism has been at the heart of allegations of extremism. A real fear exists that students may report lecturers, holding political views with which they disagree, to the police for glorifying terrorism. Pro-Palestinian academics and activists such as Sue Blackwell and Nasser Amin may actually be prosecuted as terrorists for their legitimate political beliefs.

⁸³ Association of University Teachers, *The Terrorism Bill and Academic Freedom*, November 2005

⁸⁴ *ibid*

CONCLUSION

At a time when Muslims and their beliefs of whatever hue are coming under intense scrutiny, and hostility, hatred and crimes against them are on the rise⁸⁵ this report contends that Kelly / Glee / Pope programme for campuses combined with existing trends against Muslims and 'Muslim' associated political causes heralds an unprecedented clamp down on academic freedom and civil liberties.

In the post 7-7 environment security analysts and the security community must face and challenge their own as well as societal and governmental fears and prejudices and engage in rigorous study as well as open dialogue with Muslim communities, if they are to make a real attempt at understanding the events of the summer of 2005 in London and prevent a recurrence.

Necessarily this work requires that all previous sources be viewed with a healthy amount of scepticism as well as those advisors and sources that provide convenient, oversimplified and dogmatic analyses of Muslims, Muslim and Islamic movements and general social affairs.

The idea that there are easy solutions – from proscribing non-violent organisations as terrorist to preventing foreign students from studying in the UK – is hysterical and alarmist and simply feeds racism and other forms of xenophobia including Islamophobia. Indeed the immanent contention in the Kelly / Glee / Pope thesis, supported by favoured advisors, that any community be it Muslim or other, requires a 'solution' bodes ill. Measures aimed at curbing a community's perceived overrepresentation, status or favour begin with discriminatory policy e.g. in schools and universities but then extend beyond. We have many examples from 20th Century Europe and it is road all of us should be wary of treading in the future.

⁸⁵ see e.g. Ameli, S.R., Elahi and Merali *Social Discrimination: Across the Muslim Divide* (December 2005), Islamic Human Rights Commission, London.