

Commissioner Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe  
New Scotland Yard  
8-10 Broadway  
Westminster  
London  
SW1H 0BG

13 May 2013

Dear Commissioner Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe,

**Re: Sectarian attacks on Edgware Road**

I am writing to you about the police handling of a march that passed through Edgware Road and which descended into violent chaos on Friday 10 May 2013.

The march was attended by and appears from video footage to have been led by Anjem Choudary and Sayf ul Islam formerly of Al-Gurabaa, an organisation proscribed under The Terrorism Act 2000, on the pretext of showing solidarity with the Muslims of Syria. As I am sure you are aware and as has been extensively reported, this group variously rebrands itself under different names when they are banned. Indeed, there has been much outcry and even banning of protests when these figures and their followers have protested in mainstream community areas e.g. Wooton Bassett, or against British troops in Luton.

The literature distributed for the event states on the front "The Shia enemies of Allah and Muhammed". The literature (a copy of a tweet is enclosed / attached) and video promotions for the event ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N5UzvwsmqRM&feature=youtube\\_gdata\\_player](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N5UzvwsmqRM&feature=youtube_gdata_player)), the anti-Shia hate speech used by the attackers and the fact that they targeted individuals who they perceived to be Shia clearly evidence the targeting of Shia and can be taken to incite sectarian hatred. Similarly the attacks, based on eyewitness report suggest each attack to be a hate crime.

During the march a number of the participants started to attack passerby's on Edgware Road. The violent attacks involved groups of men running up to innocent bystanders and punching, kicking and hitting them with sticks. The attacks were unprovoked and were solely based upon the fact that they assumed the victims to be Muslims from a Shia background. The attacks were sectarian in nature.

Eyewitnesses have reported that there were only two police officers present during the march and that they did nothing to stop the violent attacks. Further we have received complaints from eyewitnesses who said they approached police officers to give statements but were turned away.

Furthermore, Islamic Human Rights Commission has received a number of reports from local businesses that they were taunted and threatened by the march participants who used abusive sectarian language.

Islamic Human Rights Commission has a number of concerns with what happened:

1. Why was a march organised by known members of banned organizations, allowed to proceed? Attached is evidence that information about this event that targets Shias (it states 'Shias are the enemies of Allah' etc.) was available at least a day before it went ahead.
2. Why was the march allowed to go ahead when the stated objective was clearly a sectarian one? We have not tolerated them marching in majority community areas. Why was this march allowed to go ahead?
3. Why, throughout the duration of the incidents were there only two police officers during the march? Furthermore, when violence broke out why was further police support not available to make the necessary arrests?
4. There appears to have been a complete failure in the risk assessment for this event.

Whilst we urge the police to use video evidence (available on YouTube,) to make arrests and prosecute the individuals involved, we demand answers to the above. I am sure you will agree that there appears to be a double-standard here, where certain groups are prevented from protesting British deployment of troops in Iraq and / or in majority community areas, but allowed to march in ethnic community areas, incite hatred before and during the event and commit sectarian hate crimes.

I look forward to hearing from you in response to our questions and with an update on the progress of your investigations into the violence.

Yours sincerely,

Massoud Shadjereh

Cc Commander Alison Newcomb  
Borough Commander

Enc: copy tweet from @anjemchoudary 9 May 2013