

Orlando Fraser
Head of Charity Commission
Charity Commission
102 Petty France
London
SW1H 9AJ

By Email ONLY: CVI@charitycommission.gov.uk

We, the Friends of Islamic Centre, feel compelled to again address the Charity Commission's unjust and untenable takeover of the Islamic Centre of England (charity number: 1058998). One, but certainly not the only, concern we have is the inadequacy of the interim manager that you have imposed upon our community.

Friends of Islamic Centre is a grassroots community group, made up of donors, beneficiaries, congregants, and worshippers who use the services and facilities of the charity. We consider the mosque to be our second home. Many of our members have been associated with the charity since its inception over 26 years ago.

As evidenced by the community's decision to protest outside of the Islamic Centre on 1 June, 8 June, 15 June and 22 June (in what has become a weekly protest), the community has been mobilised by righteous anger at the Charity Commission's seizure of control. Evidently, the community does not feel able to use the mosque and fears that it is effectively being stolen from us.

As supporters and beneficiaries of the centre, our interests have been completely sidelined. The Charity Commission – and the government – appears to be using our centre to socially engineer an Islam that is acceptable to them. They are dictating to us what we can say and do at our centres, restricting or banning lawful activities, and taking away our freedom of thought and conscience. Such an attack on religious freedoms is unacceptable and an example of institutional Islamophobia, which serves to restrict our autonomy as a community.

Moreover, the appointment of Emma Moody was made against the best interests of the charity and the community it serves. The Charity Commission has ignored the fact that the people who attend the Islamic Centre or receive its support are the beneficiaries of the charity. Their views should be paramount in decisions concerning the leadership and trustees of the charity. It is religiously and culturally offensive and untenable that someone with no understanding of the community's creed, welfare, or needs should possess all powers and duties of the charity's trustees. Her appointment contradicts the verses of the Quran and the consensus of the Muslim community as to who should be running our mosques. The takeover is also a severe interference with our right to freedom of religion.

The Islamic Centre of England holds immense significance for thousands of Muslims from various backgrounds in Britain, providing us with the space to worship, engage in community activities, and access essential services like weddings and funeral care.

We emphasise that the Charity Commission is at best, negligent, regarding the needs of the Islamic Centre and the people it serves. It is indeed negligent and contrary to the principles of Islam that the mosque is managed and run by a non-Muslim as stated in the Holy Quran.

Referring to our Islamic principles again, our mosques and centres are not just for personal spiritual practices. They also must address the economic, political and social issues faced by their congregation. They are platforms from which people address the injustices they see in their communities and beyond. In short you cannot separate a mosque's spiritual and social duties. Seeking to limit this aspect of our centre is to attack the core of our beliefs and to engineer an Islam that is alien to our community but palatable to the state. We believe the Charity Commission is attempting to socially engineer the "good Muslim".

Any direction regarding the future of our Centre must be defined by the supporters of the centre who have been financing and volunteering at the institution for over 26 years. Without addressing these concerns as prominent needs the Charity Commission is undermining the charity, its aims and objectives and the interests of the beneficiaries.

We, as the community, condemn the Charity Commission's takeover of our mosque, and its attempt at socially engineering the religious beliefs and practices of our community. We demand that you repeal your decision, stop seeking to undermine the principles of Islam which should guide the running of a mosque and include the community in discussions about their charity's future.

Yours sincerely,

Friends of Islamic Centre