

Orlando Fraser

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Head of The Charity Commission

Charity Commission

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27 July 2023

Dear Sir,

Re: Interim Manager at Islamic Centre of England

We write further to the Commission's letter of 20 July 2023 on behalf of Friends of Islamic Centre. Our purpose in this letter is to urgently address the issues pertaining to the interim management and unwarranted interference with the Islamic Centre of England.

First and foremost, it is imperative to underscore that the Islamic Centre primarily exists to serve its constituency, including ourselves, making us the principal beneficiaries of the charity's endeavours. Consequently, the will of the constituency must be regarded as one of the most significant indicators of the Centre's direction and the way that it operates.

We acknowledge that the matter is currently under litigation, and we appreciate your confirmation. While we recognize that we have not taken a legal position as an interested party in the litigation up to this point, we firmly believe that this should not undermine the legitimacy of our concern and our right to be heard. We sincerely hope that in the future, we will have the opportunity to participate actively and represent our interests as beneficiaries of the charity.

As recipients and contributors to the valuable work and support provided by the Islamic Centre, we firmly insist that all parties involved must not overlook our legitimate right to be heard and considered in the overall decisions affecting the Centre. Unfortunately, in your recent correspondence, you have consistently disregarded our primary concern, as

evidenced by your implementation of conditions that fall outside the parameters of Islam, which is followed by a quarter of the global population.

As Muslims, we hold the Quran as the literal word of God, and thus, its guidance and commands are compulsory to us and our institutions. If you had understood that and indeed you read the verse "The mosques of Allah should only be maintained by those who believe in Allah and the Last Day, establish prayer, pay alms-tax, and fear none but Allah. It is right to hope that they will be among the truly guided" you would surely understand that your behaviour and appointment of an interim manager who does not fit this qualification, let alone being a non-Muslim, with whom all actions need to be cleared and approved, contradicts Islamic principles and the clearly stated verse of the Quran.

Regarding restrictions that you are trying to enforce on the Islamic Centre of England and indeed other mosques and Islamic centres, it is evident that these go beyond what the law requires of religious institutions, and are outside the Commission's powers. This is another indication of interference and social engineering a new form of Islam based on your preference and not the needs and interests of the community or the charity itself.

We have received many complaints from different mosques, Islamic societies etc. similar to the Islamic Centre's concern that you are putting restrictions under the excuse that certain things are political. Firstly, surely you understand that in Islam religion, politics and economics are inseparable. This is a fundamental aspect of Islam as understood by all Muslims and indeed acknowledged by non-Muslim experts. And further, current affairs and current issues, whether they be political, social, moral, economic in nature, it is part of the guidance that should be provided by an effective spiritual and religious centre. Indeed, these spaces are available in Churches, Synagogues, Hindu Temples, Sikh Temples and all other places of worship. To close these spaces only for Islam and Muslims is disingenuous and can only be interpreted as a deliberate obstacle to freedom of religion, which is a commitment both under national and international law.

When one looks at all the reports coming from the Islamic Centre of England and indeed other mosques and Islamic institutions, one wonders whether the Charity Commission sees themselves as the Ministry of Religion specifically to manage Islam in Britain? And does the Charity Commission consider itself qualified to interfere in lawful activities of mosques and Islamic centres? We await your genuine response addressing these grave concerns of not just us, but indeed the whole of the Muslim community in Britain.

Sincerely,

Friends of Islamic Centre