



**Centre for the Response to  
Radicalisation and Terrorism**

At The Henry Jackson Society

# Understanding CAGE: A Public Information Dossier

An Examination of Ideology, Campaigns and Support Network

Centre for the Response to Radicalisation and Terrorism  
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## Summary

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- The London-based advocacy group CAGE attracted criticism for statements about the role of British security services in the radicalisation of Islamic State executioner ‘Jihadi John’, revealed in February 2015 to be 26-year-old British-Kuwaiti Mohammed Emwazi.
- CAGE is most commonly known for its work providing support for Muslim detainees held at Guantanamo Bay. Alongside supporting terrorism suspects and opposing counter-terrorism measures, however, the group has campaigned on behalf of convicted terrorists and supported prominent jihadist ideologues. In addition, one spokesperson has personally advocated supporting violent jihad overseas.
- Formerly known as Cageprisoners, the group positions its work supporting Muslim prisoners as an Islamic duty, with material published on its website privileging the defending and freeing of Muslim prisoners of war, i.e. those captured during jihadist-related conflicts rather than Muslim prisoners in general, and supporting the idea that such prisoners are deserving of praise.
- CAGE campaigns against criminalising fighters returning from Syria and Iraq, claiming that the threat they pose has been exaggerated and that 9% of individuals involved in terrorism plots in the United Kingdom (UK) since 9/11 had received prior terrorist training or combat experience abroad. Henry Jackson Society (HJS) analysis of Islamism-inspired terrorism offences and suicide attacks in the UK between 1999 and 2010, however, shows that one in five individuals involved had received prior training/combat experience abroad and that seven of the eight major terrorism bomb plots during this time contained individual cell members who had either fought or trained abroad.
- CAGE opposes UK counter-terrorism measures arguing that they criminalise Islamic thought and practice. The group’s understanding of classical Islamic concepts, however, is indistinguishable from Islamism and is shared by prominent Islamist and jihadist figures.
- CAGE claims that UK terrorism legislation is used disproportionately against Muslims and Muslim offenders are given longer sentences than their non-Muslim counterparts. These allegations are not supported by either HJS or Home Office analysis. Home Office data on all terrorism-related convictions since 9/11 have terrorism to non-terrorism legislation ratio of 3:2, while convictions specifically for Islamism-inspired offences (1999-2010) are evenly split between terrorism and non-terrorism legislation.
- A CAGE fundraising event in London on 6 March 2015 featured speakers from of Muslim groups and extremist organisations pledging their support for CAGE. This included the Federation of Student Islamic Societies (FOSIS), a student group criticised by the coalition government in 2011 for not taking a clear stand against extremism; the Islamist group Hizb ut-Tahrir, which seeks to create an expansionist Islamist state; and the Muslim Public Affairs Committee UK, a pressure group accused of anti-Semitism.
- A common theme among speakers at the event was the assertion that both British Muslims and Islamic belief and practice are under attack from the government and that CAGE should be supported for undertaking a religious duty incumbent on all Muslims to defend their co-religionists. A CAGE spokesperson said: “each and every one of us is a terror suspect, it may not be now, it may have been yesterday, but we certainly will be tomorrow, the way things are heading”.

## Introduction

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In February 2015, it was revealed that the Islamic State (IS) executioner known as ‘Jihadi John’ was 26-year-old British-Kuwaiti Mohammed Emwazi. Within hours activists from CAGE, a lobby group that campaigns on behalf of terrorism suspects and convicted terrorists, held a press conference revealing their contact with Emwazi prior to his departure. The group described him as “extremely gentle, kind” and a “beautiful young man” and claimed that harassment by the British security services was pivotal to his radicalisation.<sup>1</sup>

This is not the first time that CAGE has supported terrorists, nor is it the first time the group has criticised the British counter-terrorism apparatus. Over the previous 18 months, as measures relating to foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq have become more robust,<sup>2</sup> CAGE has increasingly advocated that the threat from returning fighters is exaggerated and claimed that domestic counter-terrorism and counter-radicalisation policies both discriminate against British Muslim communities and threaten the free practice of normative Islamic belief.

Part One of this paper outlines the group’s work and apparent motivations as well as known links to and defence of extremists, while Part Two counters CAGE’s assessment that the threat from foreign fighters is exaggerated. Part Three addresses the group’s claim that domestic counter-terrorism measures criminalise Islam by demonstrating that CAGE’s understanding of Islamic thought and practice is indistinguishable from Islamism; and uses Henry Jackson Society (HJS) and Home Office data on UK terrorism offences to challenge CAGE’s claim that Muslims are unfairly targeted by UK terrorism legislation. Part Four addresses the cumulative impact of CAGE’s narrative within British Muslim communities by highlighting other groups which both engage in similar activism and have supported CAGE during the recent controversy.

## 1. What is CAGE?

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Founded in October 2003, CAGE, previously known as Cageprisoners, is most commonly known for its work providing support for “political Muslim detainees worldwide, specifically those interned without trial as a result of the War on Terror and its side campaigns”.<sup>3</sup> To begin, the group primarily collected and published open source information on its website, with a particular focus on those detained by the United States (US) at Guantanamo Bay.<sup>4</sup>

The group rebranded as CAGE in February 2014, altering its online description from “a human rights organisation that exists *solely* to raise awareness of the plight of the prisoners at Guantanamo Bay and other detainees held as part of the War on Terror [emphasis added]” to “an independent advocacy organisation working to empower communities impacted by the War

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Jihadi John: “Radicalised” by Britain’, CAGE, 26 February 2015, available at: [www.cageuk.org/press-release/jihadi-john-radicalised-britain](http://www.cageuk.org/press-release/jihadi-john-radicalised-britain), last visited: 19 March 2015. See also ‘Islamic State: Profile of Mohammed Emwazi aka “Jihadi John”’, *BBC News*, 2 March 2015, available at: [www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-31641569](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-31641569), last visited: 2 March 2015. See also Freedland, J., ‘Isis’s promise of certainty is what lures the likes of Mohammed Emwazi’, *Guardian*, available at: [www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/feb/27/isis-mohammed-emwazi-islamic-state-binary-view-good-evil](http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/feb/27/isis-mohammed-emwazi-islamic-state-binary-view-good-evil), last visited: 4 March 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Stuart, H., ‘British Jihadists: Preventing Travel Abroad and Stopping Attacks at Home’, Henry Jackson Society, (2014), available at: <http://henryjacksonsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/British-Jihadists.pdf>, pp. 9-14, last visited: 19 March 2015.

<sup>3</sup> ‘Giving a Voice to the VOICELESS’, Cage Prisoners, promotional leaflet, available to download from ‘About Us’, CAGE, archived web page dated 2 June 2012, available at: <http://web.archive.org/web/20120602211304/http://www.cageprisoners.com/about-us>, last visited: 16 March 2015.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*

on Terror”.<sup>5</sup> Currently, the group’s stated mission is “to highlight and campaign against state policies developed as part of the War on Terror”.<sup>6</sup>

As such, CAGE publishes reports and engages in advocacy that criticise British counter-terrorism measures as well as undertakes awareness-raising with the media, schools, universities and faith-based organisations.<sup>7</sup> Prominent employees include outreach director and former Guantanamo Bay detainee Moazzam Begg and director of research Asim Qureshi.

As well as campaigning on behalf of terrorist suspects and opposing counter-terrorism measures, CAGE has also supported convicted terrorists.<sup>8</sup> This includes Dr. Aafia Siddiqui, an al-Qaeda associate convicted in the US of attempted murder in 2010;<sup>9</sup> as well as Djamel Beghal, convicted in 2005 for his involvement in an al-Qaeda-inspired plot to bomb US targets in Paris in 2001 and his associate Nizar Trabelsi, jailed in 2003 for his involvement in a plot to target a military base in Belgium.<sup>10</sup>

CAGE has also supported prominent jihadist ideologues, including publishing an interview sympathetic to the radical preacher and convicted terrorist Abu Hamza al-Masri;<sup>11</sup> and inviting the al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) cleric Anwar al-Awlaki to speak at CAGE events on multiple occasions.<sup>12</sup> Qureshi defended this decision in December 2013, despite a 2010 US Department of Justice memo that authorised al-Awlaki’s targeting in a drone strike stating that he posed an “imminent threat” and “continues to plot attacks intended to kill Americans”.<sup>13</sup>

CAGE positions its work supporting Muslim prisoners as a religious duty which follows an injunction from Islam’s prophet Muhammad. In addition, the group appears sympathetic to the view that terrorism-related prisoners should be helped unconditionally and not criticised for the actions which attracted suspicion of involvement in terrorism. In December 2013, for example, CAGE published an “exclusive interview with Imam Anwar al-Awlaki [...] conducted by former Guantanamo detainee and Cageprisoners’ spokesman Moazzam Begg”, which ends with al-Awlaki praising the group’s work:

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<sup>5</sup> ‘About Us’, CAGE, archived version dated 9 February 2014, available at:

<http://web.archive.org/web/20140209151625/http://www.cageprisoners.com/about-us/>, last visited: 16 March 2015. See also ‘About Us’, CAGE, archived version dated 22 February 2014, available at: <http://web.archive.org/web/20140222005702/http://www.cageuk.org/about/>, last visited: 16 March 2015.

<sup>6</sup> ‘About Us: Mission’, CAGE, available at: [www.cageuk.org/about?quicktabs\\_mytabs=1#quicktabs-mytabs](http://www.cageuk.org/about?quicktabs_mytabs=1#quicktabs-mytabs), last visited: 5 March 2015.

<sup>7</sup> ‘Campaigning against the War on Terror’, CAGE, undated promotional leaflet obtained by the author at a CAGE event titled ‘Accountability – Understanding Ways to Stop the Cycle of Violence’ on Friday 6 March 2015.

<sup>8</sup> Murray, D., and Simcox, R., ‘The evidence shows that Cage is a pro-terrorist group’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 21 July 2014, available at:

[www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/law-and-order/10981050/The-evidence-shows-that-Cage-is-a-pro-terrorist-group.html](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/law-and-order/10981050/The-evidence-shows-that-Cage-is-a-pro-terrorist-group.html), last visited: 5 March 2015.

<sup>9</sup> ‘US jails Pakistani scientist for 86 years’, *BBC News*, 23 September 2010, available at: [www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-11401865](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-11401865), last visited: 5 March 2015.

<sup>10</sup> ‘Djamel Beghal – A Muslim Prisoner’s Reflections on Imaan’, CAGE, 2 August 2013, available at: [www.cageprisoners.com/our-work/opinion-editorial/item/6827-djamel-beghal-a-muslim-prisoners-reflections-on-imaan](http://www.cageprisoners.com/our-work/opinion-editorial/item/6827-djamel-beghal-a-muslim-prisoners-reflections-on-imaan), last visited: 4 March 2013. See also ‘Belgium secretly extradites Nizar Trabelsi to the US’, CAGE, 3 October 2013, available at: [www.cageprisoners.com/our-work/press-releases/item/7081-belgium-secretly-extradites-nizar-trabelsi-to-the-us](http://www.cageprisoners.com/our-work/press-releases/item/7081-belgium-secretly-extradites-nizar-trabelsi-to-the-us), last visited: 4 March 2013.

<sup>11</sup> ‘Interview with Abu Hamza’, CAGE, 6 June 2008, available at: [www.cageprisoners.com/our-work/interviews/item/140-interview-with-abu-hamza](http://www.cageprisoners.com/our-work/interviews/item/140-interview-with-abu-hamza), last visited: 5 March 2015.

<sup>12</sup> Anwar al-Awlaki was invited to address CAGE’s annual fundraising dinners in both 2008 and 2009. After the group was prevented from broadcasting Awlaki’s video message at the 2009 dinner by Kensington and Chelsea Council who owned the premises where the event was held, CAGE promoted the video on YouTube, titled ‘BANNED: Imam Anwar al-Awlaki’s Speech for a Cageprisoners Event’. The video has subsequently “been removed because its content violated YouTube’s Terms of Service”. See ‘Cageprisoners Statement Regarding Kensington Town Hall Ban on Imam Anwar al-Awlaki’, CAGE, 27 August 2009, available at: <http://old.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=30185>, last visited: 5 March 2015. See also ‘Cageprisoners: Banned Imam Anwar al-Awlaki Speech’, *YouTube*, 16 September 2009, available at: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZM0-TmjFjn4&index=3&list=PLF2B5B3C603402499](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZM0-TmjFjn4&index=3&list=PLF2B5B3C603402499), last visited: 5 March 2015. See also Qureshi, A., ‘Anwar Al-Awlaki: A Missed Opportunity’, CAGE, 28 December 2013, available at: <http://cageuk.org/article/anwar-al-awlaki-missed-opportunity>, last visited: 5 March 2015.

<sup>13</sup> Qureshi, A., ‘Anwar Al-Awlaki: A Missed Opportunity’, CAGE, 28 December 2013. See also Memorandum for the Attorney General Re: Applicability of Federal Criminal Laws and the Constitution to Contemplated Lethal Operations Against Shaykh Anwar al-Awlaqi, U.S. Department of Justice Office of Legal Counsel, 16 July 2010, available at: <http://time.com/2912137/memo-anwar-al-awlaki-doj-drone/>, last visited: 5 March 2015.

**MB:** In sha'Allah. Finally, I suppose it's a question for Cageprisoners. Do you have any words about your feelings towards organisations like Cageprisoners are; what you think of our work, good or bad?

**AA:** The brothers and sisters at Cageprisoners are fulfilling the order of RasulAllah (salla Allahu 'alayhi was-salam)<sup>14</sup> which was stated in Bukhari [xxi], 'Seek the release of the prisoner', and they are at the forefront of fulfilling this command of RasulAllah (salla Allahu 'alayhi was-salam) so I ask Allah azza wa jall to reward them and assist them in their efforts.

**MB:** Barak Allahu feek [xxii]. JazaakAllahu khairan, ya Shaykh.

**AA:** Wa iyyakum. [xxiii]<sup>15</sup>

[xxi] Bukhari: Saheeh Bukhari is one of the two most authentic collections of hadith, the sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad.

[xxii] Barak Allahu feek: May Allah bless you.

[xxiii] Wa iyyakum: And you

By virtue of the interview's continued publication and the veneration shown to al-Awlaki, CAGE appears to assent to his description of the group as fulfilling Muhammad's orders by acting in the manner of Islam's prophetic traditions as collected in the *hadith*.<sup>16</sup> In particular, CAGE appears to interpret al-Awlaki's reference to *hadith* compiler al-Bukhari as the freeing of Muslim prisoners of *jihad* or 'religiously sanctioned warfare'. A very early (and active at the time of writing) CAGE webpage, titled 'Statements of Classical Scholars on Freeing Muslim Captives', for example, states:

The scholars have many positions on this subject, but they are agreed upon it being obligatory to free the Muslim prisoners of *war*; by either sacrificing ourselves or by our wealth [emphasis added].<sup>17</sup>

The webpage lists a series of English translations from classical Sunni scholars, which confirm that the relevant context is prisoners of war i.e. those prisoners captured by the enemy, specifically non-Muslims, rather than Muslim prisoners within an Islamic State. Furthermore, the statements suggest that attempting to rescue such prisoners is *wajib*, or obligatory and considered by the majority of scholars to be *fard al-kifaya*, a collective duty upon Muslims which is satisfied if a sufficient number of adults perform it.

Examples provided by CAGE include:

It is necessary to rescue the Muslim prisoners from the hands of the disbelievers by fighting them.

Ibn Juzai al-Maliki

Our scholars have said that ransoming the prisoners with money is *wajib* (obligatory), even if one dirham does not remain in the Islamic Treasury.

al-Qurtubi

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<sup>14</sup> RasulAllah (salla Allahu 'alayhi was-salam), or 'The messenger of God (peace be upon him)'.

<sup>15</sup> 'Moazzam Begg Interviews Imam Anwar al Awlaki', CAGE, 28 December 2013, available at: [www.cageuk.org/article/moazzam-begg-interviews-imam-anwar-al-awlaki](http://www.cageuk.org/article/moazzam-begg-interviews-imam-anwar-al-awlaki), last visited: 16 March 2015.

<sup>16</sup> Islam's Prophet's entire *hadith* are published in six canonical collections, of which those by al-Bukhari and Muslim are considered the most reliable. Similar material may be found in the *sira* ('biographical narratives devoted to the Prophet').

<sup>17</sup> 'Statements of Classical Scholars on Freeing Muslim Captives', CAGE, 31 December 2003, available at: <http://old.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=84>, last visited: 19 March 2015.

Ibn Battal said that freeing the prisoners is compulsory on a collective duty (Fard Kifayah). This opinion is also held by the majority of the scholars.

Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani<sup>18</sup>

In addition, another early (and active at the time of writing) CAGE webpage discusses an English translation of a Friday sermon delivered by a Saudi Sheikh in 2002 entitled ‘Who Will Stand up for the Muslim Prisoners?’<sup>19</sup>. The link to the PDF copy of the English translation, copyright by Cageprisoners.com, is not active but an archived version reveals that the sermon specifically relates to prisoners captured during jihadist-related conflicts, such as those held in Guantanamo Bay, rather than Muslim prisoners in general, with the Sheikh stating that such prisoners are deserving of praise:

Such are the prisoners that have fallen into the hands of our enemies: prisoners in Palestine and prisoners in Cuba and in other areas of the globe. These men: they are the ones who went forth to raise the flag of Jihad; they are the ones who went forth to aid their brethren, to defend the sanctity of the Muslims and their honour at a time when many had become despondent. Such people have a right over the Ummah to come to their aid and to stand by them in their trial. Such was the Messenger of Allah (SAWS) who ordered his Ummah, “*Secure the release of the captive!*” [Al-Bukhari]<sup>20</sup>

[...] to the families of the prisoners, to the families of the heroes, to the families of those who raised our heads... you should know that your sons were not imprisoned because of giving into lowly desires, nor due to a crime that people would hide away from in shame. Rather, the whole World is proud of your sons, they were not taken except from the highest peaks of this religion, doing Jihad in the Cause of Allah, defending the honour and fighting the disbelievers.<sup>21</sup>

While the CAGE webpage clearly states “Cageprisoners.com does not accept liability or responsibility for the content of translations that it provides for information purposes only” it also encourages readers to refer to or distribute the sermon, stating:

This sermon was reproduced on hundreds of thousands of audio cassettes that were then sold and distributed throughout the Arab World. Material from this sermon may be useful in highlighting the plight of the prisoners as part of Cageprisoner.com’s Friday Khutbah Campaign, both inside and outside Ramadan.

In addition, the CAGE translation praises the sermon, introducing it as:

It was an outstanding sermon and it is hoped that all those who were not present can benefit from it, especially on an issue that has been overlooked by many, even the Islamic propagators.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> ‘Statements of Classical Scholars on Freeing Muslim Captives’, CAGE, 31 December 2003.

<sup>19</sup> ‘Who Will Stand Up For The Muslim Prisoners - English Translation of Sermon by Sheikh Al Habdaan’, CAGE, 20 November 2003, available at: <http://old.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=123>, last visited: 19 March 2015.

<sup>20</sup> ‘Who Will Stand up for the Muslim Prisoners?’, Sermon by Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah Al Habdaan, 16 August 2002, translated by CAGE, © Cageprisoners.com 2003, previously available at: [www.cageprisoners.com/dn\\_files/habdaansermon.pdf](http://www.cageprisoners.com/dn_files/habdaansermon.pdf) [link no longer active], an archived version is available at: [http://web.archive.org/web/20040928092544/http://cageprisoners.com/dn\\_files/habdaansermon.pdf](http://web.archive.org/web/20040928092544/http://cageprisoners.com/dn_files/habdaansermon.pdf), last visited: 19 March 2015, p. 2.

<sup>21</sup> ‘Who Will Stand up for the Muslim Prisoners?’, Sermon by Sheikh Al Habdaan, 16 August 2002, translated by CAGE, pp. 10-11.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*, p. 1.

The sermon end with the following recommendations:

[...] O Muslims! After this long exposition, I summarise to you in point form and I advise you all:

1. Keep alive the plight of the prisoners in the media, shed some light on it and expose American politics towards the Muslims.
2. Contact institutions and organisations that are concerned about human rights, to intervene and lighten the torture that the Mujahid prisoners are undergoing.
3. Put pressure on governments demanding them to extract information about the prisoners and to return them to their countries.
4. Form a body of sincere lawyers to give weight to the issue both in their own countries and abroad.
5. Announce Jihad against the heads of disbelief in order to secure the release of the Muslim prisoners, as our leaders and rulers had done previously [...]<sup>23</sup>

CAGE also published a 2007 article by Faraj Hassan, described as a “former detainee”, which outlined the scriptural basis for defending and freeing Muslim prisoners as a religious duty. Hassan had previously been convicted *in absentia* in Italy for membership of a terrorist group and was described during the trial as the ‘European envoy’ of Musab al-Zarqawi, the former head of al-Qaeda in Iraq.<sup>24</sup> He was detained in the UK between 2004 and 2007 pending extradition to Italy and later deportation to Libya; and in 2008 was subject to a series of restrictions for terrorism suspects, known as Control Orders.<sup>25</sup> In his article, Hassan wrote:

[...] Muhammad (SAW) often used to seek Allah’s protection for prisoners to protect them against fear. This is why hadith scholars have spoken at length about this issue. The religious texts which urge Muslims to help each other clearly include texts about helping Muslims prisoners as a priority [...].

What saddens us is that some ignorant people ignore this completely and say that “the prisoners are suffering because they are confused about their religion and have followed a path other than that of guidance. They deserve everything they get and thus they must bear the consequences of what happens to them”. In saying such things, ignorant people ignore texts that generally and specifically concern helping these prisoners of faith who are our brothers in Islam. These reasons are all materialistic, worldly excuses; if these prisoners are not the most deserving of our help, then who should we help?<sup>26</sup>

CAGE employees have also personally advocated supporting violent jihad overseas. At a protest outside the US embassy in 2006 organised by the revolutionary Islamist group Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT), which works to re-establish an expansionist Caliphate, Qureshi said:

When we see the examples of our brothers and sisters, fighting in Chechnya, Iraq, Palestine, Kashmir, Afghanistan, then we know where the example lies [...] We

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<sup>23</sup> ‘Who Will Stand up for the Muslim Prisoners?’, Sermon by Sheikh Al Habdaan, 16 August 2002, translated by CAGE, p. 13.

<sup>24</sup> Simcox, R., ‘Control Orders: Strengthening National Security’, Henry Jackson Society, available at: <http://henryjacksonsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/CONTROL-ORDERS.pdf>, pp. 84-86, last visited: 16 March 2015.

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> ‘A Call to Support Muslim Prisoners’, CAGE, 10 November 2007, available at: <http://old.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=22382>, last visited: 16 March 2015.

know that it is incumbent upon all of us to support the jihad of our brothers and sisters in these countries when they are facing the oppression of the West.<sup>27</sup>

In March 2014, Begg was with charged terrorism offences related to Syria, specifically of providing terrorist training and funding terrorism overseas.<sup>28</sup> In October 2014, days before the trial was due to start, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) withdrew all charges after evidence emerged which, according to a West Midlands Police statement, had “a significant impact on key pieces of evidence that underpinned the prosecution’s case”.<sup>29</sup>

Since then, there have been claims that Begg attended the same northern Syrian training camp as Emwazi. On 15 March 2015, the *Mail on Sunday* reported that police evidence had included a photograph of Begg taken in December 2012 with Abu Omar al-Shishani, a senior IS figure who was then leader of the militant group Katibat al-Muhajireen; while a video dating to early 2013 features al-Shishani and a masked individual believed to be Emwazi allegedly at the same camp.<sup>30</sup> CAGE denies the allegations.<sup>31</sup>

## 2. Syria, Iraq and the Threat from Foreign Fighters

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Within the context of foreign fighters and the risk they represent in terms of blowback, is there any empirical evidence that can be suggested to claim that returning fighters pose a national security threat to the UK?

CAGE, July 2014<sup>32</sup>

### *2.1. UK Terrorism Threat Assessment in Response to the Syria/Iraq Conflict*

Latest estimates suggest that up to 700 British Muslims have travelled to fight in Syria and Iraq, with many joining jihadist groups, including the proscribed terrorist organisation Islamic State (IS). Up to 320 have returned, of which some, having received combat experience and terrorist training, will seek to engage in terrorism in the UK.<sup>33</sup>

In January 2014, Richard Walton, then head of the Metropolitan Police’s counter-terrorism unit, described an attack in the UK by a fighter returning from Syria as “almost inevitable”.<sup>34</sup> Since then,

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<sup>27</sup> ‘Asim Qureshi speaks at Hizb ut-Tahrir rally’, *Youtube*, 19 August 2006, available at: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=DXGPPqyK3Srg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DXGPPqyK3Srg), last visited: 5 March 2015.

<sup>28</sup> ‘Moazzam Begg charged with Syria terror offences’, *BBC News*, 1 March 2014, available at: [www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-26397035](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-26397035), last visited: 5 March 2015.

<sup>29</sup> ‘Moazzam Begg released after terror charges dropped’, *BBC News*, 1 October 2014, available at: [www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-29442623](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-29442623), last visited: 5 March 2015.

<sup>30</sup> ‘Did Cage director train Jihadi John? MoS uncovers new evidence that links apologists for ISIS butcher to his desert weapons camp’, *Mail on Sunday*, 15 March 2015, available at: [www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2995140/Did-Cage-director-train-Jihadi-John-MoS-uncovers-new-evidence-links-apologists-ISIS-butcher-desert-weapons-camp.html#ixzz3UYFjrKJ](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2995140/Did-Cage-director-train-Jihadi-John-MoS-uncovers-new-evidence-links-apologists-ISIS-butcher-desert-weapons-camp.html#ixzz3UYFjrKJ), last visited: 16 March 2015.

<sup>31</sup> ‘British Press Resort to Fabrication in an Attempt to Smear Cage’, CAGE, 15 March 2015, available at: [www.cageuk.org/press-release/british-press-resort-fabrication-attempt-smear-cage](http://www.cageuk.org/press-release/british-press-resort-fabrication-attempt-smear-cage), last visited: 16 March 2015.

<sup>32</sup> Qureshi, A., ‘Blowback - Foreign Fighters and the Threat they Pose’, CAGE, (2014), available at:

[www.cageuk.org/sites/files/reports/A4\\_CAGE\\_SYRIA\\_REPORT.pdf](http://www.cageuk.org/sites/files/reports/A4_CAGE_SYRIA_REPORT.pdf), last visited 2 March 2015, p. 10. See also ‘Blowback - Foreign Fighters and the Threat They Pose’, CAGE, 17 July 2014, available at: <http://cageuk.org/publication/blowback-foreign-fighters-and-threat-they-pose>, last visited: 2 March 2015. See also, ‘Press Release: Cage Releases Report on Purported Threat of British Fighters Returning from Syria’, CAGE, 23 July 2014, available at: [www.cageuk.org/press-release/press-release-cage-releases-report-purported-threat-british-fighters-returning-syria](http://www.cageuk.org/press-release/press-release-cage-releases-report-purported-threat-british-fighters-returning-syria), last visited 2 March 2015.

<sup>33</sup> ‘Extremism in Britain: Now the crackdown is launched’, *Sunday Telegraph*, 8 March 2015, available at: [www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/terrorism-in-the-uk/11457174/Extremism-in-Britain-Now-the-crackdown-is-launched.html](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/terrorism-in-the-uk/11457174/Extremism-in-Britain-Now-the-crackdown-is-launched.html), last visited 9 March 2015.

<sup>34</sup> ‘Anti-terrorism chief warns of British girls inspired by Jihad’, *Evening Standard*, 23 January 2014, available at: [www.standard.co.uk/news/crime/exclusiveanti-terrorism-chief-warns-of-british-girls-inspired-by-jihad-9080110.html](http://www.standard.co.uk/news/crime/exclusiveanti-terrorism-chief-warns-of-british-girls-inspired-by-jihad-9080110.html), last visited: 19 March 2015.

the UK terrorism alert level has been increased from “substantial” to “severe”, meaning that an attack is considered “highly likely”;<sup>35</sup> and in November 2014, Home Secretary Theresa May stated that the threat from Islamism-inspired terrorism is “now more dangerous than at any time before or since 9/11”.<sup>36</sup>

In January 2015, the Director General of the Security Service (MI5) confirmed that since October 2013 there had been “more than 20 terrorist plots either directed or provoked by extremist groups in Syria” directed at targets outside of Syria and Iraq; and that three terrorist plots had been stopped in the UK “in recent months alone”.<sup>37</sup>

In response to this heightened threat, the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act, which received Royal Assent on 12 February 2015, contained various Syria-related measures, including temporary exclusion orders to manage the return of foreign fighters and enhanced powers to withhold passports from those suspected of undertaking travel for terrorist purposes.<sup>38</sup>

### ***2.2. CAGE Denial of the Threat from Foreign Fighters***

In July 2014, CAGE published a report, ‘Blowback – Foreign Fighters and the Threat they Pose’, one month before the release of the IS video showing the then-unnamed Emwazi apparently murdering American journalist James Foley. The report argued that the threat from fighters returning from Syria had been exaggerated and that instead it is foreign policy and domestic counter-terrorism measures, referred to as “blanket criminalisation”, which alienate Muslims and lead to “increased disenfranchisement” as well as “the continued threat of terrorism in the UK”.<sup>39</sup>

Report author Qureshi downplayed the threat from British fighters in Syria in interviews across the UK’s broadcast media. On BBC 2’s current affairs programme *Newsnight* in May 2014, for example, he cited data from the report on the apparent lack of foreign fighting and/or training in terrorism plot cases in the UK to dispute the claim that foreign fighters returning from previous jihadist-related conflicts had threatened or attacked targets in the West.<sup>40</sup> Specifically, the report claims that since the 9/11 terrorist attacks, 66 individuals have been involved in “terrorism plot cases”, of which only six, or 9%, had been involved in “fighting/training abroad”.

The terrorism cases cited by CAGE, however, resulted in a total of 58 individuals either being convicted for terrorism offences (related to the plot) in the UK or being killed in a suicide attack on British territory. Of these, a third (33%, n=19) were proven to have fought or trained abroad prior to the offence. A further two of the 58 individuals either unsuccessfully attempted to join a terrorist organisation abroad or spent time with a militant group abroad in an unspecified capacity.

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<sup>35</sup> ‘Threat level from international terrorism raised’, Prime Minister’s Press Statement, 29 August 2014, available at: [www.gov.uk/government/speeches/threat-level-from-international-terrorism-raised-pm-press-conference](http://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/threat-level-from-international-terrorism-raised-pm-press-conference), last visited: 19 March 2015.

<sup>36</sup> ‘Home Secretary Theresa May on counter-terrorism’, Home Office, 24 November 2014, available at: [www.gov.uk/government/speeches/home-secretary-theresa-may-on-counter-terrorism](http://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/home-secretary-theresa-may-on-counter-terrorism), last visited: 19 March 2015.

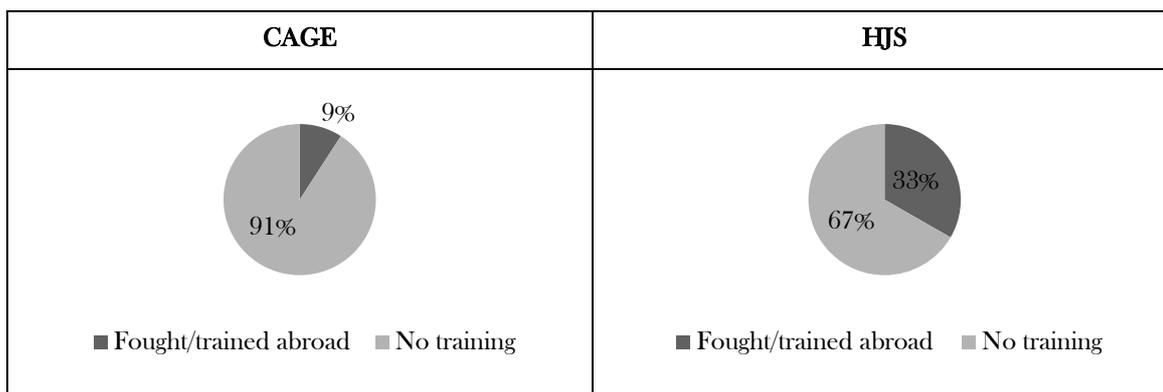
<sup>37</sup> Address by the Director General of the Security Service, Andrew Parker, to the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) at Thames House, 8 January 2015, available at: [www.rusi.org/events/past/ref:E54AF03D376DA6#.VK8GYVoZc20](http://www.rusi.org/events/past/ref:E54AF03D376DA6#.VK8GYVoZc20), last visited: 19 March 2015.

<sup>38</sup> ‘Counter-Terrorism and Security Bill receives Royal Assent’, Home Office, 12 February 2015, available at: [www.gov.uk/government/news/counter-terrorism-and-security-bill-receives-royal-assent](http://www.gov.uk/government/news/counter-terrorism-and-security-bill-receives-royal-assent), last visited: 10 March 2015.

<sup>39</sup> Qureshi, A., ‘Blowback – Foreign Fighters and the Threat they Pose’, CAGE, (2014), p. 28.

<sup>40</sup> *Newsnight*, BBC 2, 20 May 2014, see ‘BBC Newsnight - Why shouldn’t British Muslims fight in Syria?’, *YouTube*, 21 May 2014, available at: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=bsr7Y8o-V6M&list=UUGmdsvj\\_lJ96fhsjdBaCfyw..](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bsr7Y8o-V6M&list=UUGmdsvj_lJ96fhsjdBaCfyw..), last visited: 11 March 2015.

*Figure 1: Comparison of CAGE and HJS data on UK terrorists*



*Figure 2: Comparison of CAGE and HJS data on UK terrorists*

CAGE <sup>a</sup>		HJS <sup>a</sup>	
Plot	Fought/trained abroad	Plot	Fought/trained abroad
Fertilizer Bomb Plot	2 - “Salahudin Amin, Omar Khan among 7 defendants trained in Pakistan”	Fertilizer Bomb Plot 2004 (5 individuals convicted in the UK)	5 - Omar Khan, Salahudin Amin, Anthony Garcia, Waheed Mahmood, Jawad Akbar (all trained in Pakistan)
Financial Building Plot	1 - “Dhiren Barot trained and fought”	Dirty Bomb Plot 2004 (8 individuals)	2 - Dhiren Barot (trained in Pakistan, Afghanistan and the Philippines); Abdul Aziz Jalil (trained in Pakistan)
London Bus/Tube Plot	1 - “Mohammad Siddique Khan, among four defendants in the case trained in Pakistan”	7/7 Suicide Attacks 2005 (4 individuals)	2 - Mohammad Siddique Khan (trained in Pakistan and Afghanistan); Shezhad Tanweer (trained in Pakistan)
Failed London Plot	N/a	21/7 Bomb Plot 2005 (6 individuals)	1 - Muktar Said Ibrahim (trained in Pakistan and Sudan)
British Soldier Behead Plot	N/a	Abu Bakr Mansha’s Plot (to kill Cpl Mark) 2005 (1 individual)	N/a
Transatlantic Airline Plot	1 - “Ahmed Abdullah Ali trained in Pakistan, among 8 defendants”	Transatlantic Liquid Bomb Plot 2006 (10 individuals)	3 - Ahmed Abdullah Ali, Adam Osman Khatib, Asad Ali Sarwar (all trained in Pakistan)

<sup>a</sup> Qureshi, A., ‘Blowback - Foreign Fighters and the Threat they Pose’, CAGE, (2014), p. 12.

<sup>a</sup> Unless otherwise stated all information is taken from Simcox, R., Stuart, H., Ahmed, H., and Murray, D., ‘Islamist Terrorism: The British Connections’, Henry Jackson Society, (2011), 2nd ed., print.

## UNDERSTANDING CAGE: A PUBLIC INFORMATION DOSSIER

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Soldier Behead Plot	N/a	Parviz Khan Soldier Plot 2007 (2 individuals)	N/a
Glasgow Airport Plot	N/a	Glasgow Airport and London West End Bomb Plot 2007 (2 individuals)	N/a (It is disputed whether Bilal Abdulla fought/trained with insurgents in Iraq)
Exeter Bomb Plot	N/a	Exeter Bomb Plot 2008 (1 individual)	N/a
Suicide Bomb Plot	N/a	Birmingham Rucksack Plot 2011 (11 individuals) <sup>43</sup>	6 - Ifran Naseer, Ifran Khalid, Ishaq Hussan, Shahid Khan, Naweed Ali and Khobaib Hussain (all trained in Pakistan)
EDL Bomb Plot	N/a	EDL Bomb Plot 2012 (6 individuals) <sup>44</sup>	N/a
Woolwich Incident	N/a	Murder of Drummer Rigby 2013 (2 individuals) <sup>45</sup>	N/a (Michael Adebolajo attempted to train in Somalia with al-Shabaab)

### ***2.3.HJS Data on Foreign Terrorist Training/Combat Experience among UK Terrorists***

Individuals who had previously fought in jihadist conflicts or trained abroad have been disproportionately involved in the most serious Islamism-inspired terrorism offences in the UK.

HJS analysis of Islamism-inspired terrorism offences between 1999 and 2010 in the UK found that 134 individuals had either been convicted of such offences or killed themselves in suicide attacks. Of these, almost one in five (19%, n=26/134) had attended foreign terrorist training camps and/or obtained combat experience abroad.

During this time, there were eight major terrorism bomb plots (which either resulted in convictions or suicide attacks) involving 37 individuals.<sup>46</sup> Of these, 15, or 41%, had attended foreign terrorist training camps and/or obtained combat experience abroad. Individuals with foreign terrorist training/combat experience were, therefore, much more prominent among the major Islamism-inspired terrorist offenders than they were among all Islamism-inspired terrorist offenders (41% and 19% respectively).

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<sup>43</sup> 'R v Ifran Naseer and others', Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), undated, available at: [www.cps.gov.uk/publications/prosecution/ctd\\_2013.html#a01](http://www.cps.gov.uk/publications/prosecution/ctd_2013.html#a01), last visited: 19 March 2015.

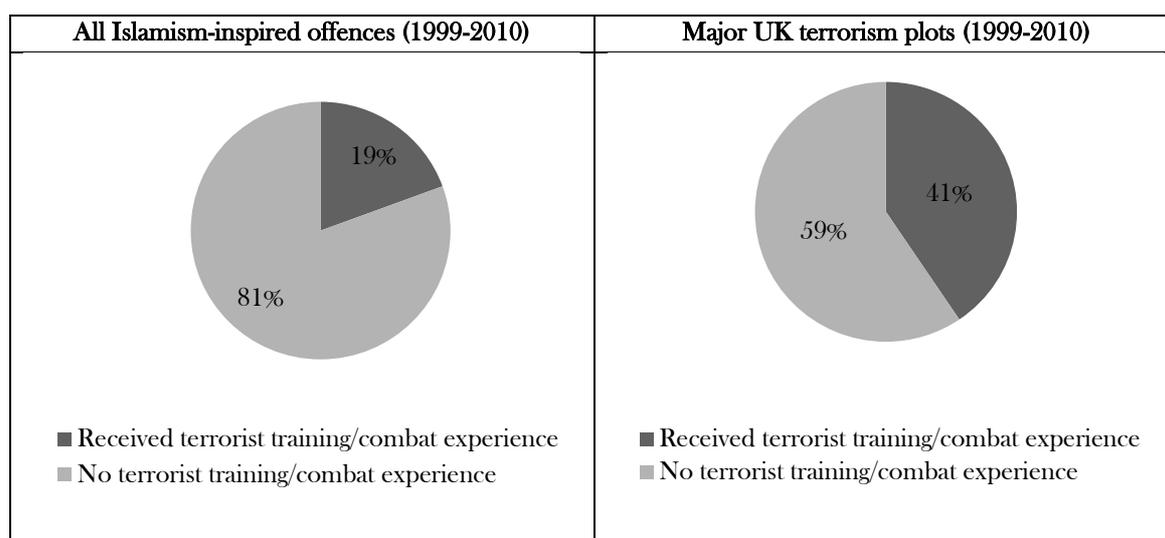
<sup>44</sup> 'R v Omar Khan, Jewel Uddin, Mohammed Hasseen, Mohammed Saud, Zohaib Ahmed and Anzal Hussain', CPS, undated, available at: [www.cps.gov.uk/publications/prosecution/ctd\\_2013.html#a04](http://www.cps.gov.uk/publications/prosecution/ctd_2013.html#a04), last visited: 19 March 2015.

<sup>45</sup> 'Men guilty of murdering Fusilier Lee Rigby', CPS, 19 December 2013, available at: [www.cps.gov.uk/news/latest\\_news/men\\_guilty\\_of\\_murdering\\_fusilier\\_lee\\_rigby/index.html](http://www.cps.gov.uk/news/latest_news/men_guilty_of_murdering_fusilier_lee_rigby/index.html), last visited: 19 March 2015.

<sup>46</sup> Between 1999 and 2010 there was one successful attack: the 7/7 London bombings in 2005. Seven other major bomb plots were either unsuccessful or thwarted by the Security Service and the police: the 2001 'shoe bomb' plot, for which Sajjid Badat was the only cell member convicted in the UK; the 2003 'ricin bomb' plot for which Kamel Bourgass was the only cell member convicted in the UK; the 2004 'fertiliser bomb' plot headed by Omar Khyam; the 2004 'dirty bomb' plot headed by Dhiren Barot; the 2005 21/7 plot headed by Muktar Said Ibrahim; the 2006 transatlantic 'liquid bomb' plot headed by Abdulla Ahmed Ali; and the Glasgow airport and London Haymarket attacks in 2007 carried out by Bilal Abdulla's cell.

Foreign training or combat experience was therefore a distinguishing feature of almost every major terrorist plot. Seven of the eight plots contained individual cell members who had attended foreign terrorist training camps and/or obtained combat experience abroad prior to the date of charge or incident. It is disputed whether Bilal Abdulla, whose cell was responsible for the 2007 Glasgow Airport attack, had received training from or fought with the insurgent group Soldiers of the Islamic States of Iraq with whom he had associated in 2006.<sup>47</sup>

**Figure 3: All Offences and Major Plots: Foreign Terrorist Training/Combat Experience**



As a location for terrorist training, Pakistan featured most prominently – six cells included members who had attended camps there – followed by Afghanistan. In addition to these locations, cases since 2011 feature both Somalia and Syria as popular destinations.<sup>48</sup>

**Figure 4: Major Plots: Location of Foreign Terrorist Training/Combat Experience**

Plot	No. of cell members	Location of terrorist training/combats experience				No. with training/combats experience
		Pakistan	Afghanistan	Philippines	Sudan	
‘Fertiliser bomb’ cell	5	5	–	–	–	5
21/7 cell	6	1	–	–	1	1
Transatlantic cell	10	3	–	–	–	3
7/7 cell	4	2	1	–	–	2
‘Dirty bomb’ cell	8	2	1	1	–	2
‘Ricin bomb’ cell	1	–	1	–	–	1
‘Shoe bomb’ cell	1	1	1	–	–	1
Bilal Abdulla’s cell	2	–	–	–	–	0
<b>All UK plots</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>15</b>

<sup>47</sup> ‘Glasgow airport bomber was being tracked by MI5’, *Guardian*, 17 December 2015, available at: [www.theguardian.com/uk/2008/dec/17/glasgow-airport-bomber-bilal-abdulla](http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2008/dec/17/glasgow-airport-bomber-bilal-abdulla), last visited: 6 March 2015.

<sup>48</sup> ‘Foreign Fighters’, MI5 website, undated, available at: [www.mi5.gov.uk/home/about-us/what-we-do/the-threats/terrorism/international-terrorism/international-terrorism-and-the-uk/foreign-fighters.html](http://www.mi5.gov.uk/home/about-us/what-we-do/the-threats/terrorism/international-terrorism/international-terrorism-and-the-uk/foreign-fighters.html), last visited: 19 March 2015.

In addition, individuals who had either trained or fought abroad have also been involved in some of the most serious terrorism-related convictions in the UK between 2011 and the present. This includes the eleven-strong 2011 Birmingham-based terrorism cell “plan[ning] to commit an act or acts of terrorism on a scale potentially greater than the London bombings in July 2005”,<sup>49</sup> six of whom had previously travelled to Pakistan for terrorist training, including bomb-making, weapons training and poison-making.<sup>50</sup> Other cases involving individuals with foreign combat or training experience include four men who “used their Manchester market stall as a front to lure young men [...] with the ultimate aim of recruiting them to attend terrorist training camps and fight overseas”;<sup>51</sup> and a Luton-based cell which plotted to detonate explosives inside a Territorial Army base.<sup>52</sup>

### *2.4. Conclusion*

CAGE’s 2014 report on Syria and foreign fighters concludes that “[...] there is no direct evidence of blowback”,<sup>53</sup> and the group’s advocacy, which appears to centre on opposition to the criminal prosecution of returning fighters, is predicated on the view that, “policies should not be based on fictional scenarios [...]”.<sup>54</sup> HJS data on the prevalence of individuals with foreign terrorist training/combat experience among previous UK Islamism-inspired terrorism offences, however, demonstrates the historical precedent of individuals who have fought or trained abroad attacking UK targets on their return and suggests that the likelihood of ‘blowback’ from Syria and Iraq is not, as CAGE imply, a fictional threat.

## 3. Domestic Counter-Terrorism Measures

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CAGE unequivocally opposes UK counter-terrorism measures, which the group believes infringe upon civil liberties and demonise British Muslim communities. The group’s website states:

Under the slogan ‘War on Terror’, there have been moves in the United Kingdom to prioritise national ‘security measures’ over basic principles of justice and fairness. [...] This has resulted in the alienation and criminalisation of the Muslim community but has also created a ‘security state’, dramatically affecting the life of the wider British society.<sup>55</sup>

The group states that British policies amount to the criminalisation of Islamic thought and practice and that terrorism legislation, in particular, disproportionately targets British Muslims – both arguments which can serve to engender fear within British Muslim communities and distrust of state policies.

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<sup>49</sup> ‘R v Irfan Naseer and others’, CPS.

<sup>50</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> ‘CPS statement on R V Farooqi ad others’, CPS, 9 September 2011, available at: [www.cps.gov.uk/news/latest\\_news/cps\\_statement\\_on\\_r\\_v\\_farooqi\\_and\\_others/index.html](http://www.cps.gov.uk/news/latest_news/cps_statement_on_r_v_farooqi_and_others/index.html), last visited: 19 March 2015.

<sup>52</sup> ‘Four Luton men jailed for preparation of terrorist acts’, CPS, 18 April 2013, available at: [www.cps.gov.uk/news/latest\\_news/four\\_luton\\_men\\_jailed\\_for\\_preparation\\_of\\_terrorist\\_acts/index.html](http://www.cps.gov.uk/news/latest_news/four_luton_men_jailed_for_preparation_of_terrorist_acts/index.html), last visited: 19 March 2015.

<sup>53</sup> Qureshi, A., ‘Blowback – Foreign Fighters and the Threat they Pose’, CAGE, (2014), p. 28.

<sup>54</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> ‘UK Terrorism Policy’, CAGE, undated, available at: [www.cageuk.org/category/tag/uk-terrorism-policy](http://www.cageuk.org/category/tag/uk-terrorism-policy), last visited: 17 March 2015.

### 3.1. CAGE on the ‘Criminalisation of Islam’

CAGE argues that security policies both globally and in the UK are inherently prejudiced against Islam and that those who object to them are excluded from mainstream discourse. For example, the group’s website states:

A careful and holistic observation of the War on Terror clearly shows that it aims at criminalising in practice any form of legitimate dissent by conveniently labelling objectors of conscience as ‘terrorists’ or ‘extremists’. [...] In particular, the War on Terror has been characterised by sustained attacks on classical Islamic concepts and Muslim opponents to state policies across the world.<sup>56</sup>

CAGE’s understanding of classical Islamic concepts, however, is typical of the arguments advanced by proponents of jihadist ideology. One CAGE campaign, for example, titled ‘Is it a Crime to Care?’ argues that the “criminalisation of those who believe in fighting in Syria against Assad” equates to the “criminalisation of Islam”. Campaign literature lists a number of perceived Islamic concepts which the group states are under attack:

Whereas the attacks on Islamic concepts of war, political governance and the unity of Muslim lands are nothing new, they have now increased on an unprecedented scale in the wake of the rise of ISIS and its declaration of a Caliphate. The matter is not about supporting or opposing the version of a Caliphate as demonstrated by ISIS but rather the criminalisation of Islamic political thought and ideology. The concepts of jihad, shariah and khilafah are not the exclusive possession of ISIS but core Islamic doctrines subscribed to by almost one third’s of the world’s population. It is telling that the government’s treatment of ISIS is similar to its treatment of Hamas, the Muslim Brotherhood, Hizb-ut Tahrir, and the Taliban, despite the enormous differences of belief and methodology between the groups.<sup>57</sup>

In this quote, CAGE interprets *sharia*, or Islamic principles and law, as political governance and *khilafah*, or caliphate, as the unity of Muslim lands. This is an Islamist interpretation, which centres on the belief that within Sunni jurisprudence only a state which implements the religious principles of *sharia* as divine law is considered *Dar al-Islam* (‘lands of Islam’) and can provide the necessary security and legitimacy for its Muslim residents.<sup>58</sup>

The preferred form of this state is an expansionist global caliphate. Across the spectrum of Islamism, the perceived religious duty for a single caliphate is a point of unity. Methodological differences notwithstanding, jihadist groups (who are prepared to use violence in order to achieve their aims), revolutionary Islamists Hizb ut-Tahrir and entry-level Islamists like the Muslim Brotherhood, all share the fundamental aim of establishing an expansionist caliphate under a single leader – the caliph – who will unite Muslims globally under one interpretation of *sharia*.<sup>59</sup>

While CAGE does not advocate either political violence or terrorism, the group’s description of

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<sup>56</sup> ‘Ideology’, CAGE, undated, available at: [www.cageuk.org/category/tag/ideology](http://www.cageuk.org/category/tag/ideology), last visited: 17 March 2015.

<sup>57</sup> ‘Is It A Crime To Care?’, CAGE, undated, available at: [www.cageuk.org/project/it-crime-care](http://www.cageuk.org/project/it-crime-care), last visited: 17 March 2015.

<sup>58</sup> Ali, R., and Stuart, H., ‘A Guide to Refuting Jihadism: critiquing radical Islamist claims to theological authenticity’, Henry Jackson Society, (2014), available at: [www.henryjacksonsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Refuting-Jihadism.pdf](http://www.henryjacksonsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Refuting-Jihadism.pdf), last visited: 17 March 2015, pp. 15-18.

<sup>59</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 38.

the common denominators within Islamist thought as “core Islamic doctrines” is shared by prominent Islamist and jihadist figures, and is not, as the group suggests, reflective of collective Muslim belief. In fact, there is much traditional legal opinion which differs from that of Islamists; and for many Muslims the Islamist ideology’s inherent sectarianism is antithetical to the normative values displayed within classical Sunni jurisprudence.<sup>60</sup>

### ***3.2. CAGE on Unequal Application of Terrorism Legislation in the UK***

A second key component of CAGE’s opposition to UK counter-terrorism measures is the claim that they disproportionately target Muslims, both in terms of Muslims being more likely to be charged under terrorism legislation than non-terrorism legislation for comparable offences and Muslim terrorist offenders receiving longer sentences than extreme far-right-inspired offenders.

In December 2014, for example, following the sentencing of two Muslim men, Yusuf Sarwar and Mohammed Ahmed, to 12 years and 8 months each for preparation of acts of terrorism in relation the conflict in Syria, a CAGE press release stated that: “There can be no doubt regarding the growing evidence that Britain has a two tier criminal justice system. Muslims receive the severest punishment and the highest sentences compared to non-Muslims”.<sup>61</sup>

During an interview with al-Jazeera in the same month, Begg stated that Muslims are disproportionately charged with terrorism offences while those charged with extreme far-right-inspired offences are prosecuted under the Explosive Substances Act 1883, a claim used to evidence the existence of different standards for Muslim and non-Muslim terrorism suspects. During the interview, Begg claimed that:

Just a few days ago [...] a British man was arrested and convicted, even though he had nail bombs that he was making in this country in Manchester. He had a list of targets and he wanted to cause mayhem in this country. He wasn’t charged under terrorism laws, he was charged under the 1866 Explosives Act, yet a Muslim who is not a threat to this country, [...] every time there’s a Syria-related arrest in this country, it is quickly followed by saying “there is no threat to the British public”. Now, what kind of a double parallel legal system have we got? One for Muslims and one for others.<sup>62</sup>

Begg references Ryan McGee, a serving soldier who was sentenced to two years on 28 November 2014 for producing a homemade nail bomb. Specifically, McGee pleaded guilty to possession of information likely to be useful to a person committing or preparing an act of terror, namely ‘The Anarchist Cookbook’, contrary to section 58(1b) of the Terrorism Act 2000; and making explosives contrary to section 4(1) of the Explosives Substance Act 1883, namely making an Improvised Explosive Device.<sup>63</sup> According to the CPS, “the Crown accepted it was never McGee’s intention to use the device for any terrorist or violent purpose, and that he had no firm intention

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<sup>60</sup> Ali, R., and Stuart, H., ‘A Guide to Refuting Jihadism’, Henry Jackson Society, (2014).

<sup>61</sup> ‘Syria Sentences: I Know these Men and They are not Terrorists’, CAGE, 5 December 2015, available at: [www.cageuk.org/press-release/syria-sentences-i-know-these-men-and-they-are-not-terrorists](http://www.cageuk.org/press-release/syria-sentences-i-know-these-men-and-they-are-not-terrorists), last visited: 17 March 2015.

<sup>62</sup> ‘Life after Guantanamo: Activist Moazzam Begg talks ISIL, Islam and Syria’, *al-Jazeera*, 1 December 2014, available at: <http://stream.aljazeera.com/story/201412011623-0024387>, last visited: 11 March 2015.

<sup>63</sup> ‘Soldier who made nail bomb jailed for two years’, CPS, 28 November 2014, available at: [www.cps.gov.uk/news/latest\\_news/soldier\\_who\\_made\\_nail\\_bomb\\_jailed\\_for\\_two\\_years/](http://www.cps.gov.uk/news/latest_news/soldier_who_made_nail_bomb_jailed_for_two_years/), last visited: 17 March 2015.

to activate the device”.<sup>64</sup> McGee’s case was widely cited, however, not only by CAGE, but also by newspapers and blogs predominately aimed at Muslim audiences as evidence of double standards, particularly in relation to Syria-related prosecutions.<sup>65</sup>

In his 2011 annual report on the operation of the UK’s Terrorism Acts, the Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation, David Anderson Q.C., identified this perceived link between religion, the characterisation of an offence as terrorism and the resultant sentence length:

Some Muslims believe that there is a greater readiness on the part of press, politicians, police and law enforcement officers to characterise attacks by Muslims as ‘terrorism’ than attacks by far-right extremists. This, they say, results in discriminatory sentencing and cements popular perceptions of terrorism, at least in Great Britain, as crime perpetrated overwhelmingly by Muslims.<sup>66</sup>

Anderson acknowledged that due to the broad definition of terrorism in UK legislation “crimes may be associated with the ‘T-word’ for no other reason than the organisational arrangements of the law enforcement bodies concerned”, but concluded that he had “not found evidence of such discrimination”.<sup>67</sup> While there have been individual cases, such as that of McGee, which generate accusations of unequal, neither Home Office statistics on terrorism-related convictions nor HJS analysis of Islamism-inspired terrorism offences, both over ten-year plus periods, indicate that Muslims are being disproportionately convicted under terrorism legislation rather than non-terrorism legislation or being given longer sentences for comparable offences.

### *3.3. Home Office Statistics on the Outcomes of Terrorism-related Arrests in the UK*

Home Office statistics on the operation of police powers under the Terrorism Act 2000 and subsequent legislation in Great Britain provide data on the outcome of persons arrested for terrorism-related offences, including subsequent convictions categorised by the principal offence.<sup>68</sup>

According to the most recent data, 380 people were convicted of terrorism-related offences following a terrorism-related arrest between 11 September 2001 and 30 June 2014, of which 227 (60%) principal offences were contrary to terrorism legislation and 153 (40%) were contrary to other legislation but were considered to be terrorism-related.<sup>69</sup> The most common principal offence convicted under non-terrorism legislation has been offences under the Explosive

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<sup>64</sup> Private correspondence, Special Crime & Counter Terrorism Division, CPS, 19 March 2015.

<sup>65</sup> See, for example, ‘Far-right bomb maker not a terrorist, say police and CPS’, *The Muslim News*, 24 December 2014, available at: [www.muslimnews.co.uk/newspaper/home-news/far-right-bomb-maker-not-terrorist-say-police-cps/](http://www.muslimnews.co.uk/newspaper/home-news/far-right-bomb-maker-not-terrorist-say-police-cps/), last visited 17 March 2015. See also Hussain, D., ‘The curious case of Ryan McGee’, *5 Pillars*, 9 December 2014, available at: <http://5pillarsuk.com/2014/12/09/the-curious-case-of-ryan-mcgee/>, last visited: 17 March 2015.

<sup>66</sup> David Anderson Q.C., ‘Report on the Operation in 2011 of the Terrorism Act 2000 and of Part 1 of the Terrorism Act 2006’, HM Government (2012), available at: [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/228552/9780108511769.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/228552/9780108511769.pdf), last visited: 26 August 2014, p. 37.

<sup>67</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> The principal offence for the charges made following an arrest; when a suspect is charged with several offences the principal offence is the most serious one based upon the maximum penalty for each offence.

<sup>69</sup> Table A.06c Total outcomes of charges for terrorism-related offences under terrorism and non-terrorism legislation, Operation of police powers under the Terrorism Act 2000, quarterly update to June 2014: data tables, Home Office, 4 December 2014, available at: [www.gov.uk/government/statistics/operation-of-police-powers-under-the-terrorism-act-2000-quarterly-update-to-june-2014-data-tables](http://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/operation-of-police-powers-under-the-terrorism-act-2000-quarterly-update-to-june-2014-data-tables), last visited: 11 March 2015. For a definition of terrorism-related see ‘User guide to operation of police powers under the Terrorism Act 2000 and subsequent legislation’, Home Office, (2014), available at: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/user-guide-to-operation-of-police-powers-under-the-terrorism-act-2000-and-subsequent-legislation](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/user-guide-to-operation-of-police-powers-under-the-terrorism-act-2000-and-subsequent-legislation), last visited: 11 March 2015, p. 7.

Substances Act 1883 (18%, n=27/153) followed by conspiracy to murder (10%, n=16/153) and offences under the Forgery and Counterfeiting Act 1981(10%, n=15/153).<sup>70</sup>

Home Office data on terrorism-related arrests is categorised as ‘International’ (primarily that inspired by al-Qaeda);<sup>71</sup> ‘Domestic’ (primarily from members or associates of extremist animal rights or far-right groups);<sup>72</sup> ‘Northern-Ireland related’;<sup>73</sup> or ‘Not Classified’.<sup>74</sup> Data on subsequent convictions includes all categories of terrorism and neither provides principal offence information according to motive nor the self-identified religion of the offender.

Despite these limitations, it is evident that all terrorism-related convictions in Great Britain (following a terrorism-related arrest between 11 September 2001 and 30 June 2014) were slightly more commonly charged under terrorism legislation than under non-terrorism legislation (60% and 40% respectively). In addition, offences involving bomb-making and the handling of explosive substances, as well as murder offences, were pre-eminent among terrorism-related convictions under non-terrorism legislation.

Following the concerns of perceptions of inequality regarding sentencing raised by the Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation, the Home Office analysed charging and sentencing outcomes by religion. The resultant briefing shows that following a terrorism-related arrest in Great Britain between 11 September 2001 and the end of August 2012 there were, “no significant differences in the proportions charged, sentence length, or seriousness of offence between Muslim offenders and offenders of other or no religion”. The analysis acknowledged limitations, including that religion is self-reported and often incomplete and that sentence length is often impacted by other factors such as plea or the presence of mitigating or aggravating factors. Despite this, analysis of sentencing outcomes by seriousness of offence and religion showed that “the profile of actual sentence lengths within each of these categories appears broadly similar for Muslim offenders and offenders with other or no religion”.<sup>75</sup>

### ***3.4. HJS Data on the Use of Terrorism Legislation in the UK***

HJS analysis of Islamism-inspired terrorism offences between 1999 and 2010 in the UK found that 129 British or foreign nationals had been convicted in 133 separate convictions (two individuals were convicted of offences on two separate occasions and one was convicted of offences on three separate occasions);<sup>76</sup> and a total of five perpetrators had been killed during two suicide attacks.

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<sup>70</sup> A.08b Principal offences for which persons convicted under non-terrorism legislation and where considered terrorism-related, Operation of police powers under the Terrorism Act 2000, quarterly update to June 2014: data tables, Home Office, 4 December 2014.

<sup>71</sup> Refers to activity by an individual or a group of individuals (regardless of nationality) linked to or motivated by any terrorist group that is based outside the UK which operates in and from third countries. See also ‘User guide to operation of police powers under the Terrorism Act 2000 and subsequent legislation’, Home Office, (2014), p. 12.

<sup>72</sup> Refers to terrorism-related activity where there are no links to either Northern Ireland related or international terrorism; see *ibid*.

<sup>73</sup> Refers to activity by an individual or a group of individuals supporting the actions or ideology of a proscribed Northern Ireland related terrorist group, see *ibid*.

<sup>74</sup> Refers to persons currently considered to have no links to any domestic, international or Northern Ireland related terrorism, for example, members of the public arrested for failure to comply with border controls under Schedule 7 who do not have any terrorist links, see *ibid*.

<sup>75</sup> Terrorism arrests - analysis of charging and sentencing outcomes by religion, Home Office, 12 September 2013, available at: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/terrorism-arrests-analysis-of-charging-and-sentencing-outcomes-by-religion/terrorism-arrests-analysis-of-charging-and-sentencing-outcomes-by-religion](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/terrorism-arrests-analysis-of-charging-and-sentencing-outcomes-by-religion/terrorism-arrests-analysis-of-charging-and-sentencing-outcomes-by-religion), last visited: 11 March 2015.

<sup>76</sup> Abdul Muhid and Abdul Rahman Saleem have been convicted of offences on two separate occasions. Saeede Ghafoor has been convicted of offences on three separate occasions. Simcox, R., *et al*, ‘Islamist Terrorism: The British Connections’, Henry Jackson Society (2011), 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., p. 253.

Offences included for analysis were limited to those motivated primarily by a belief in Islamism that were contrary to UK terrorism legislation,<sup>77</sup> as well as any other criminal offences that met the criteria for terrorism found in Section 1 of the Terrorism Act 2000, specifically: “The use or threat [of action] designed to influence the government or to intimidate the public or a section of the public [...] for the purpose of advancing a political, religious or ideological cause”.<sup>78</sup>

Between 1999 and 2010, a total of 213 charges were successfully prosecuted in 133 separate cases for Islamism-inspired terrorism offences (multiple counts of the same charge were not included). Of these, just under half (49%, n=105/213) were contrary to terrorism legislation and just over half (51%, n=108/213) were contrary to non-terrorism legislation. Similarly, half of principal offences in the 133 separate cases, (50%, n=66/133) were contrary to terrorism legislation and half (50%, n=67/133) were contrary to non-terrorism legislation.

Islamism-inspired terrorism-related convictions in the UK between 1999 and 2010 were, therefore, equally as likely to be brought under non-terrorism legislation as they were under terrorism legislation.

*Figure 5: All Islamism-inspired Convictions (1999-2010): Legislation*

Legislation	Principal Offence		All Charges	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Terrorism legislation	66	49.62%	105	49.30%
Non-terrorism legislation	67	50.38%	108	50.70%
<b>Total</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>213</b>	<b>100%</b>

The most common among the 213 charges, possessing a document or record containing information likely to be useful to a person committing or preparing an act of terrorism (21 occasions), is contrary to the Terrorism Act 2000. This is followed, however, by intent or conspiracy to cause explosions (17 occasions) and conspiracy to murder (15 occasions), both contrary to non-terrorism legislation. Together they represent a quarter (25%, n=53/213) of all successful prosecutions.<sup>79</sup>

Principal offences under non-terrorism legislation were most commonly secured under the Explosive Substances Act 1883. Specifically, conspiracy to cause explosions and making an explosive substance with intent constituted 11% (n=14/133) of all principal offences. Other common legislation included the Criminal Law Act 1977 i.e. conspiracy to murder, conspiracy to cause public nuisance and assisting an offender; and Offences against the Person Act 1861, i.e. soliciting to murder.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> The Terrorism Acts 2000 and 2006; the Anti-Terrorism Crime and Security Act 2001; and the Prevention of Terrorism Act 2005.

<sup>78</sup> Simcox, R., *et al.* 'Islamist Terrorism: The British Connections', Henry Jackson Society (2011), 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., pp. xvi-xvii.

<sup>79</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 281-284.

<sup>80</sup> *ibid.*

With the exception of two individuals acting alone,<sup>81</sup> all convictions under the Explosive Substances Act 1883 for Islamism-inspired terrorism offences involved terrorist cells planning, attempting or carrying out imminent bomb attacks against UK and transatlantic targets and included the 2004 ‘Fertiliser bomb’ cell; the 2004 ‘Dirty bomb’ cell; the failed 21/7 attacks; the 2006 Transatlantic ‘liquid bomb’ cell and the 2007 Glasgow airport attack. They were among the most serious Islamism-inspired offences that occurred between 1999 and 2010; and, as such, attracted lengthy sentences, with life sentence minimum terms ranging from 16 years 9 months to 36 years as well as determinate sentences ranging from 15 to 33 years.<sup>82</sup>

### *3.5. Conclusion*

CAGE allegations that domestic counter-terrorism legislation is used disproportionately against Muslims and that Muslim offenders are given longer sentences than their non-Muslim counterparts are not supported by either Home Office statistics on terrorism-related convictions or HJS analysis of Islamism-inspired terrorism offences.

Islamism-inspired offences have been slightly more commonly prosecuted under non-terrorism legislation compared to all terrorism-related offences over comparable time periods. Home Office data on all terrorism-related convictions have terrorism to non-terrorism legislation ratio of 3:2; while convictions specifically for Islamism-inspired offences between 1999 and 2010 are evenly split between terrorism and non-terrorism legislation.

After McGee’s conviction for making a nail bomb under the Explosives Substance Act, CAGE told *The Muslim News* that, “This case does show that violent crime can be understood outside of terrorism legislation [...] the approach taken in McGee’s case should be replicated in cases relating to ‘terrorism’ in the UK”.<sup>83</sup> Between 1999 and 2010, however, the majority of the most serious Islamism-inspired terrorism offences were prosecuted under the same legislation as McGee.

## 4. CAGE Supporters

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### *4.1. Criticism of CAGE*

CAGE attracted significant criticism as a result of their statements on Enwazi, including from prominent politicians, such as Prime Minister David Cameron, whose official spokesperson immediately called the group’s comments “reprehensible”.<sup>84</sup> The following week, in what was widely interpreted as an attack on CAGE, Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond said: “The

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<sup>81</sup> Isa Ibrahim, who was planning a potential suicide attack at a shopping centre in Bristol and who received an indeterminate sentence for public protection [minimum term of 10 years]; and Moimul Abedin, convicted for stockpiling explosives with intent, who received 20 years. See Simcox, R., *et al.* ‘Islamist Terrorism: The British Connections’, Henry Jackson Society (2011), 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., pp. 6, 212.

<sup>82</sup> Simcox, R., *et al.* ‘Islamist Terrorism: The British Connections’, Henry Jackson Society (2011), 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.

<sup>83</sup> ‘Far-right bomb maker not a terrorist, say police and CPS’, *The Muslim News*, 24 December 2014.

<sup>84</sup> ‘David Cameron condemns Cage for blaming MI5 over radicalisation of Jihadi John’, *Daily Telegraph*, 27 February 2015, available at: [www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/david-cameron/11439605/David-Cameron-condemns-Cage-for-blaming-MI5-over-radicalisation-of-Jihadi-John.html](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/david-cameron/11439605/David-Cameron-condemns-Cage-for-blaming-MI5-over-radicalisation-of-Jihadi-John.html), last visited: 11 March 2015.

responsibility for acts of terror rests with those who commit them. But a huge burden of responsibility also lies with those who act as apologists for them”.<sup>85</sup>

Qureshi was also criticised across the UK’s broadcast and print media. Most notable was his repeated questioning by the BBC presenter Andrew Neil on whether he condemned the extreme theological positions advocated by his self-identified mentor Haitham al-Haddad, including female genital mutilation, domestic violence and the stoning to death of adulterous women. Qureshi repeatedly refused to give an answer, instead saying: “I’m not a theologian” and “As far as I am concerned, Sharia law isn’t practised correctly anywhere in the world”.<sup>86</sup>

CAGE finances have also come under renewed scrutiny. The UK regulatory body for registered charities, the Charity Commission, which had previously opened monitoring cases into the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust and the Roddick Foundation over the funding they had given to CAGE,<sup>87</sup> announced that both organisations had “ceased funding CAGE and will not be doing so in future”.<sup>88</sup> The Commission had advised that continued funding of CAGE by registered charities after the public statements on Emwazi “risked damaging public trust and confidence in charity”.<sup>89</sup>

After Begg was arrested on suspicion of terrorism-related offences in February 2014 the group’s bank accounts with Barclays and Co-operative Bank were closed, a decision CAGE later made a formal complaint about to the Financial Ombudsman Service.<sup>90</sup> Currently, CAGE does not have a bank account and relies on online donations via the platform ‘I Give Online’; cash donations by recorded delivery; and by personally collecting money raised in London.<sup>91</sup>

### ***4.2. Support for CAGE***

In response to recent criticism, CAGE held a fundraising and solidarity event entitled ‘Accountability – Understanding Ways to Stop the Cycle of Violence’ on Friday 6 March 2015. The event featured speakers from a variety of Muslim groups and extremist organisations, all of whom publicly pledged their support for CAGE in response to public criticism of the group’s recent statements.<sup>92</sup>

#### ***4.2.1. CAGE***

The event was chaired by CAGE representative Fahad Ansari, who opened the evening with a speech thanking the audience for showing courage by attending and spoke throughout the evening introducing and thanking speakers. Ansari claimed that recent criticism of CAGE equated to criticism of Islamic beliefs and that, in time, the group’s stance on Emwazi and the influence of the security services would be proven right. During the evening, Ansari said:

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<sup>85</sup> ‘Terror “apologists” must share blame – Hammond’, *BBC News*, 10 March 2015, available at: [www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-31809453](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-31809453), last visited: 11 March 2015. See also ‘Cage: human rights advocates or apologists for terror?’, *Channel 4 News*, 11 March 2015, available at: [www.channel4.com/news/cage-human-rights-advocates-or-apologists-for-terror](http://www.channel4.com/news/cage-human-rights-advocates-or-apologists-for-terror), last visited: 11 March 2015.

<sup>86</sup> ‘Cage director Asim Qureshi refuses to condemn stoning of adulterous women’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 6 March 2015, available at: [www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/islamic-state/11453846/Cage-director-Asim-Qureshi-refuses-to-condemn-stoning-of-adulterous-women.html](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/islamic-state/11453846/Cage-director-Asim-Qureshi-refuses-to-condemn-stoning-of-adulterous-women.html), last visited: 11 March 2015.

<sup>87</sup> ‘Cage lodges complaint with financial ombudsman over closure of bank accounts’, *Third Sector*, 7 October 2014, available at: [www.thirdsector.co.uk/cage-lodges-complaint-financial-ombudsman-closure-bank-accounts/governance/article/1316140](http://www.thirdsector.co.uk/cage-lodges-complaint-financial-ombudsman-closure-bank-accounts/governance/article/1316140), last visited: 5 March 2015.

<sup>88</sup> ‘Charity Commission statement: charities funding CAGE’, The Charity Commission, 6 March 2015, available at: [www.gov.uk/government/news/charity-commission-statement-charities-funding-cage](http://www.gov.uk/government/news/charity-commission-statement-charities-funding-cage), last visited: 11 March 2015.

<sup>89</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> ‘Cage lodges complaint with financial ombudsman over closure of bank accounts’, *Third Sector*, 7 October 2014.

<sup>91</sup> ‘Help Us by Donating’, CAGE, available at: [www.cageuk.org/content/help-us-donating](http://www.cageuk.org/content/help-us-donating), last visited: 11 March 2015.

<sup>92</sup> The author attended the event. Statements by speakers in this section are listed alphabetically by group followed by individuals.

What we've seen over the past week or so has been a closing of ranks, of the far-right, of corrupt politicians and of the white media, [*inaudible*] by the courageous stance that has been taken by CAGE and its representatives. For over one week now, on a daily basis, we have seen a debate about the role of security services in the radicalisation of young Muslims descend from a legal, a moral argument to issues about individuals' personal Islamic beliefs. [...]

And it's with great courage that all of you are attending here because, make no doubt, CAGE is toxic [...] so, it's hard to keep our heads up. It's difficult. It's dangerous. But it's at times like this, at testing times, it's at times like this that the real victory comes.

[...] each and every one of us is a terror suspect, it may not be now, it may have been yesterday, but we certainly will be tomorrow, the way things are heading.

The event also featured a short address by CAGE director Dr Adnan Siddiqui, who focused on presenting CAGE as a group that “say[s] things which no one wants to hear”, claiming that the organisation will survive attempts to shut it down and that his experiences with CAGE inform him professionally as a GP within the NHS. During his speech, he said:

*Al-hamdulillah* [‘thanks be to God’] I say to you is that, our job, if this is the end of the line for us, it's not a problem. What we've always said that CAGE is not so much an organisation, it's an attitude. You cannot destroy an attitude. [...] Allah is our protector; Allah is our *wali* [‘guardian’]. [...] I live the Qur'an because of the work that is coming from CAGE; stories in the Qur'an become alive to me. You know when you saw Asim talking [...] he was saying the gentle word to the oppressor [...]

But it is something which is very much that they need to realise that there are things that we're not just going to reject; they are from the *haqq* [‘truth’]; accountability and justice are from the *haqq*. I would just say to you that, to end really on this point, that I am extremely proud of having been a director of CAGE, whatever they say. I know that it has made me a better doctor, it's made me a better human being, it's made me a better Muslim. [...] we have to have an MOT as doctors every year called an appraisal and half the stuff I put down in there is actually related to CAGE and they haven't struck me off. That's what the Daily Mail would be shocked at!

#### 4.2.2. *Federation of Student Islamic Societies (FOSIS)*

FOSIS is the largest Muslim student society umbrella group in the UK. While the group is diverse and provides guidance to student Islamic societies (Isocs), there is evidence that some external speakers promoted or co-ordinated by FOSIS have displayed sectarian and intolerant attitudes towards non-believers and minorities as well as advocated ideas of a Western war against Islam, support for paramilitary violence in Israel and Islam as a political system for law and governance.<sup>93</sup> In its 2011 review of the counter-radicalisation strategy, Prevent, the coalition government singled out FOSIS for not taking a clear stand against extremism, saying: “We judge that FOSIS has not

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<sup>93</sup> Sutton, R., and Stuart, H., ‘Challenging Extremists: Practical Frameworks for our Universities’, Henry Jackson Society (2012), available at: <http://henryjacksonsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/SRSocialMedia.pdf>, last visited: 17 March 2015.

always fully challenged terrorist and extremist ideology within higher and further education sectors. [...].<sup>94</sup>

Ibrahim Ali, the current FOSIS Vice President of Student Affairs, spoke at the CAGE event, giving both personal and institutional support for CAGE. His appearance was not mentioned in advance on promotional material or on FOSIS social media. During his speech, Ali claimed intimidation was being used across UK campuses to silence Muslim students, that Muslim students were being surveyed in their prayer rooms and that they felt threatened by the security services' attempts to blackmail them into spying on their fellow students. During his speech, he said:

[...] the intimidation, the tactics and the methods that are used to, you know, silence Muslims, to create the 'Good Muslim', the 'Bad Muslim'. The 'Good Muslim' being the inactive; the quiet; the weak; have no feeling; no value; does very little; nothing to say. And the 'Bad Muslim', the one with the opinion; the one who is direct; the one who has a voice; the one who articulates their concerns; and the one who has a conscious, a political consciousness.

[...] my political driver, you could say, lot of it is down to the courage that CAGE gives me every single day [...] It is one of the few places in the country that actually are going to create the revolutionary approach to how we deal with justice and dignity of the Muslims in the West. And I really urge you to support them wherever you can.

[...] And what we do and what CAGE does is we actually create a broad coalition of organisations, of activists on campuses, to say that Prevent in itself is a racist agenda; it's an Islamophobic agenda; an agenda that's based on no evidence to say that it's a success or understands what it's trying to achieve and there's no understanding of where it's heading as well.

We're seeing prayer rooms being fitted with cameras and audio recording equipment. We're seeing prayer rooms being fitted with finger printing in some cases, in one case. We've seen universities, asking for, *khutbahs* ['sermon, in particular for Friday prayer'] to be vetted [...].

But what we don't all see is complicity by staff members as well. Academics, teachers, lecturers, support services; the people who are there to support students at the most vulnerable moment in their lives, being complicit in the Prevent agenda.

[...] Muslim students being blackmailed by security services to spy on their own Islamic societies, on their own Muslim clubs, their groups, people they might have grown up with for years. [...] They can't turn to their family. They can't turn to their friends because they're scared, and they turn to people [like me] because they have to turn to someone, they feel like it is coercion and they can't put up with it for much longer [...]

One thing I said to the brothers at FOSIS who were very sceptical about whether this strategy I employed about CAGE was the right idea, I said look, the real answer to

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<sup>94</sup> 'Prevent Strategy', HM Government, (2011), available at: [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/97976/prevent-strategy-review.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97976/prevent-strategy-review.pdf), last visited: 18 February 2015, p. 75.

the question will be, is how long CAGE lasts; in the next five months if CAGE is still standing they've won the argument. [...] And I really urge you to support CAGE, to stand with CAGE, but not only that as well [*inaudible*] to educate yourselves, your families and for the young Muslims here, you are genuinely at the best position in your life, where you have no strings attached; no job; no family; no material income; nothing to be scared of. You have this genuine freedom on campus. Use it and use it to the benefit of the *ummah* ['transnational Muslim community']'.

### 4.2.3. *Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT)*

HT, or the 'Party of Liberation', is a revolutionary Islamist group actively working in over 40 countries worldwide to establish an expansionist state and, ultimately, a new world order based on Islamist principles. In the UK, one of the group's principal aims is to create a monolithic political Muslim bloc to aid its global Islamist revolution and, ultimately, to subvert Western societies.<sup>95</sup> Despite calls from within both the Labour and Conservative parties for the group to be proscribed, previous HJS research suggests such action would not be permitted under existing counter-terrorism legislation,<sup>96</sup> a position supported by the current Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation.<sup>97</sup> As such, the group would fall under the remit of Prevent as an "extremist (albeit legal) group",<sup>98</sup> one whose influence should be challenged both by public and civic institutions as well as within communities.

Two representatives from HT spoke in defence of CAGE at the event: Dr. Abdul Wahid, the current Chair of HT's UK-Executive Committee;<sup>99</sup> and Ibtihal Bsis, the group's Deputy Women's Media Representative, who often appears under the pseudonym, Umm Harith.<sup>100</sup> Both speakers focused on criticising the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act, specifically the new duty on specified authorities to have due regard for the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism, making the delivery of Prevent a legal requirement across England, Scotland, and Wales.<sup>101</sup> In his introduction to Bsis' speech, CAGE representative Ansari said that the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act "is going to make spies of our doctors and teachers and our nurses and our public service providers; everybody's going to become an MI5 agent".

During his speech, Dr Wahid said:

And you've [CAGE] taken a bigger stride than I've seen in years in countering this narrative that Islam causes extremism and terrorism. And there's plenty of information out there that shows that people that undertake these actions do it on the grounds of grievances they feel based on foreign policy largely, western foreign

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<sup>95</sup> Ahmed, H., and Stuart, H., 'Profile: Hizb ut-Tahrir in the UK', *Current Trends In Islamist Ideology*, Vol. 10, pp. 143-172, p. 144, available at: [www.hudson.org/content/researchattachments/attachment/1293/ahmed\\_stuart.pdf](http://www.hudson.org/content/researchattachments/attachment/1293/ahmed_stuart.pdf), last visited: 17 February 2015.

<sup>96</sup> Ahmed, H., and Stuart, H., 'Hizb ut-Tahrir: Ideology and Strategy', Centre for Social Cohesion, (2009), available at: <http://henryjacksonsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/HIZB.pdf>, last visited: 19 March 2015, pp. 117-119, 143.

<sup>97</sup> David Anderson Q.C., 'Report on the Operation in 2010 of the Terrorism Act 2000 and of Part 1 of the Terrorism Act 2006', HM Government (2011), available at: [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/243552/9780108510885.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/243552/9780108510885.pdf), last visited: 26 August 2014, pp. 36-37.

<sup>98</sup> 'Prevent duty guidance: a consultation', HM Government, (2014), available at: [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/388934/45584\\_Prevent\\_duty\\_guidance-a\\_consultation\\_Web\\_Accessible.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/388934/45584_Prevent_duty_guidance-a_consultation_Web_Accessible.pdf), last visited: 15 February 2015, p. 9.

<sup>99</sup> Abdul Wahid's Twitter description reads: "A father, son, husband, brother & current Chairman, UK-Executive Committee Hizb ut-Tahrir [retweet] is not endorsement!". See 'Abdul Wahid', Twitter, available at: <https://twitter.com/abdulwahidht>, last visited: 17 March 2015.

<sup>100</sup> '@UmmiHarith', *Twitter*, available at: <https://twitter.com/ummharith>, last visited: 9 March 2015.

<sup>101</sup> HC Deb, 9 February 2015, cW, available at: [www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2015-01-14/220829/](http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2015-01-14/220829/), last visited: 13 February 2015.

policy. But what you're showing us, and what you've shown this week, and shone a light on, is how domestic policies do that as well. So it becomes incumbent on us all to speak up about these things, especially in the month after the Counter-Terrorism and Security Bill has gone through, and is going to cause all kinds of mayhem in the Muslim community in months and years to come. [...]

And I make *dua* ['prayer'] for you guys that *Allah (subhanahu wa ta'ala)* shines his mercy, and on all of us; and that he keeps everyone steadfast on this work. Those who have said this is like the work of *al-ambiya* ['prophets'], they are right, but we haven't tasted the hardship that the *al-ambiya* tasted. What the brothers have faced this week was a very, very, very great pressure and great challenge which they have risen to. But none of us should be under any delusion that this is in the past now, with this bill that's just gone through I think we're going to face it more and more. So the spiritual reminders, brothers and sisters, are even more important for us than they have ever been before.

Bsis argued that the concept of consent is misapplied in relation to the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act and that "British values" are being forced upon Muslims:

We have, as a Muslim community, questions of our own, legitimate ones. What do you want us to consent to and what will you have us condemn? Do you want us to consent to the talk of an open and free society? Why is it, then, that this is quickly followed with words of "there is no option" and "there is no choice" to adhering to our values? Did you want us to consent to your address about standing up to terrorism and using every avenue possible in order to stamp it out?

Why do you then not apply the same to Bashar al-Assad, who has not just burnt a few people he has burnt half of Syria? Did you want us to consent to your one-liner that Muslims should do more, after the Charlie Hebdo incident, that happened across a border in France? Why is it that you only remember borders when you run to the charitable aid of our suffering sisters and brothers in Syria? Why do you ask us to condemn the crimes of ISIS, who did not consult us when they committed their crimes, when you refuse to condemn the crimes of Tony Blair and George Bush in Iraq, who clearly consulted you? [...]

When Muslims are instructed to condemn, it is within a narrative that they must be guilty of association, association of belief. I am of the Muslim faith. We are not about to give up our right and we are not guilty by association.

In this climate we all stand with you, brothers and sisters of CAGE. We must not stand behind these organisations; we must stand next to them. Align ourselves to them and say to them, as Prophet Muhammad, *salla llahu alay-hi wa-sallam*, said to the *ansar* ['helpers', people of Medina who helped Muhammad]: "You are of me and I am of you".

#### 4.2.4. *Muslim Public Affairs Committee UK (MPAC UK)*

MPACUK describes itself as "a grass roots civil liberties pressure group, setup in 2001 to encourage civil engagement within the Muslim community at all levels in the UK" and campaigns

on four “core principles”, including “reviving the fard (obligation) of Jihad”.<sup>102</sup> MPAC UK was added to the NUS’s ‘No Platform Policy’ list in 2004 as a result of alleged anti-Semitic statements and actions, including a donation to the Holocaust denier David Irving.<sup>103</sup>

While the primary focus of MPAC UK’s work is anti-Zionist, in 2008 co-founder Asghar Bukhari made violent and anti-Semitic comments on Facebook:

Muslims who fight against the occupation of their lands are ‘Mujahadeen’ and are blessed by Allah. And any Muslim who fights against Israel and dies is a martyr and will be granted paradise. [...] Any public attack on Islam and the Ummah is not going to be tolerated by men like me. I have dealt with these Zionists before, a veneer of reason, below which lies a crooked mind plotting and planning to extend their hatred against us.<sup>104</sup>

Bukhari has also claimed British Muslims will face genocide if they don’t stand up for themselves,<sup>105</sup> as well as referred to al-Qaeda cleric Anwar al-Awlaki as a scholar,<sup>106</sup> and the killer of Drummer Rigby, Michael Adebolajo, as a “revolutionary”.<sup>107</sup>

During his speech, Bukhari praised Qureshi for highlighting the role of Western policies and institutions, specifically foreign policy and the security services, in creating terrorism, claiming that politicians and the media would rather portray Islam as a violent religion:

They spent years and years and years telling the world that the reason why Muslims were bombing things or acting in a violent way was because their religion was violent; their people were violent; it was their history to be violent. [...] But in one press conference some people were brave enough to turn the whole thing around. What they said is: “No. Don’t blame us for the way Muslims are behaving. Don’t blame our faith for the way Muslims are behaving. You blame yourselves. You blame your own foreign policy that murders Muslims. You blame your own security services that tortures, harasses, and destroys people’s lives”.

[...] But all these racists did were accuse CAGE of being jihadist, Islamists, or any of these propaganda words. Why? Because it destroyed their narrative. You can’t have a war unless you dehumanise the people you’re bombing. CAGE’s very press conference undermined their War of Terror [...] least I can say is thank you.

#### 4.2.5. *Muslim Research and Development Foundation (MRDF)*

Jamil Rashid is a director and company secretary for MRDF,<sup>108</sup> a project founded by Haitham Al-Haddad.<sup>109</sup> As well as justifying the death penalty for apostates, Haddad has expressed

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<sup>102</sup> ‘About Us’, MPACUK, undated, available at: [www.mpacuk.org/us](http://www.mpacuk.org/us), last visited: 17 March 2015.

<sup>103</sup> ‘Muslim leader sent funds to Irving’, *Guardian*, 19 November 2006, available at: [www.theguardian.com/uk/2006/nov/19/secondworldwar.religion](http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2006/nov/19/secondworldwar.religion), last visited: 17 March 2015.

<sup>104</sup> Sutton, R., and Stuart, H., ‘Challenging Extremists: Practical Frameworks for our Universities’, Henry Jackson Society (2012).

<sup>105</sup> ‘Europes [sic] Biggest Massacre While Scholars Debated About Matters Of Urine’, *YouTube*, available at [www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=Au8aDFYggqA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=Au8aDFYggqA), last visited 17 March 2015.

<sup>106</sup> Online activity has been screenshot and archived.

<sup>107</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>108</sup> ‘Company Overview - Muslim Research and Development Foundation’, Datalog, undated, available at: [www.datalog.co.uk/browse/detail.php/CompanyNumber/05567478/CompanyName/MUSLIM+RESEARCH+AND+DEVELOPMENT+FOUNDATIO](http://www.datalog.co.uk/browse/detail.php/CompanyNumber/05567478/CompanyName/MUSLIM+RESEARCH+AND+DEVELOPMENT+FOUNDATIO) N, last visited: 17 March 2015.

<sup>109</sup> ‘Sheikh Haitham Al-Haddad’, Sabeel, undated, available at [www.sabeel.org.uk/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=105&catid=29&Itemid=65](http://www.sabeel.org.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=105&catid=29&Itemid=65), last visited: 17 March 2015.

homophobia and misogyny, referring to the “scourge” of homosexuality, and stating that “a man should not be questioned why he hit his wife”.<sup>110</sup>

Rashid’s speech focused on the concept of Islamic unity, presenting CAGE as at the forefront of defending Muslims:

We have an organisation here, CAGE, which is not a charity, but is supported by charities. And it’s funny that it’s supported by some noble charities, and yet they’re being looked into by the Charity Commission for their support. It’s an organisation that’s supported by grassroots organisations, by brothers and sisters, children, it’s supported by teachers, doctors, academics, and I like to think, and I’m sure, that it’s supported by *Allah (subhanahu wa ta’ala)*. And when it comes to CAGE, if you look at the name itself, CAGE, what does it represent? Well it represents to me that really they’re not caged, rather they’re free, but many of us are caged. And the reason I say this, is because as a Muslim community, it’s incumbent upon all of us to be CAGE; to have their mind-set; to have their understanding; and, most importantly, to have their action.

Now what is action? Action we know is to stand up and to be counted, and in this community I’ve noticed over the last couple of years, for a Muslim to come out and say what he believes, how he understands his faith, how he acts upon his faith, is not good enough. We have to have examples like CAGE and other organisations, who will go further for us, but my question is to myself and as an organisation we ask ourselves this on a daily basis; it’s “what’s the use of being an organisations, an *Ummah*, a brotherhood, if we don’t stand up for each other? And most importantly if we don’t stand up for justice? *Allah (subhanahu wa ta’ala)* tells us “*Watasimoo bihabli Allahi jamcean wala tafarraqoo*” [Surat Ali Imran- 3:103 And hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided]. *Allah (subhanahu wa ta’ala)* puts an order upon us here. ‘*Waatasimoo*’, hold firm to; cling to; come together upon. It’s about unity. We pray together; we fast together; we come together; we are *ummah* of unity and that’s the message I want to leave you with. As an organisation, as a charity, the Muslim Research and Development Foundation, in is objectives, supports organisations like CAGE for those reasons. It’s there to bring about the voice for the voiceless; it’s there to bring about justice for those who are not given justice.

#### 4.2.6. *Muhammad Dilwar Hussain*

Muhammad Dilwar Hussain, more commonly known as Dilly Hussain, was introduced by Ansari as a journalist for the Huffington Post and 5Pillars, an Islamist blog that regularly publishes content from CAGE and HT.<sup>111</sup> Hussain has claimed “a full on ideological/cultural war is being waged on Islam and Muslims”,<sup>112</sup> and that reformist critics are “drunken liberal garbage”.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> ‘Standing up against homosexuality and LGBTs’, Islam21C, 20 March 2012, available at: [www.islam21c.com/politics/4670-standing-up-against-homosexuality-and-lgbts](http://www.islam21c.com/politics/4670-standing-up-against-homosexuality-and-lgbts), last visited: 9 March 2015. See also ‘Haitham Al-Haddad – Domestic Violence’, archived by Student Rights, and ‘Dr Haitham Al-Haddad Press Conference in Norway’, *YouTube*, available at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=4aQrx9L79yM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4aQrx9L79yM), last visited: 9 March 2015.

<sup>111</sup> See, for example, the Speakers’ Corner section of the website: ‘Speakers’ Corner’, 5Pillars, available at: <http://5pillarsuk.com/category/speakers-corner/>, last visited: 19 March 2015. Speakers’ Corner published HT representative Ibtihal Bsis speech at the CAGE event in full. See ‘Ibtihal Bsis – Consent, British values and support for CAGE’, 5Pillars, undated, available at: <http://5pillarsuk.com/2015/03/11/ibtihal-bsis-consent-british-values-and-support-for-cage/> last visited: 19 March 2015.

<sup>112</sup> ‘@DillyHussain88’, *Twitter*, available at <https://twitter.com/DillyHussain88/status/554049434066382848> Last visited 17 March 2015

Hussain presented CAGE as the vanguard of Islam in the UK, comparing Qureshi's recent media appearance on BBC's *This Week* to the work of the *anbiya*, or 'prophets', specifically praising Qureshi for refusing to condemn the statements by Haitham al-Haddad on the stoning to death of adulterous women according to the *hudud*, or punishments prescribed in Islamic law.

Yesterday, when Asim was on BBC *This Week*, after it finished I texted him. *Al-hamdulillah*. Indeed we are involved in the work of the *anbiya*. Indeed when Allah sent them down on this Earth with the message, they too faced hardship. They faced character assassination. In some cases, the societies and communities tried censoring them. They faced verbal abuse. And in some cases, there were even attempts of violently shutting this message down. I say, that we remain steadfast in this *deen* ['belief'] and CAGE spoke up against the face of injustice.

But another stance which is very praise-worthy, which CAGE took over the past week, is this whole collective guilt of condemnation. They stayed away from that. [...] We've been condemning terrorism for the past thirteen, fourteen years, and our situation has only worsened. Islamophobia is on the rise; anti-Muslim hate crime is on the increase; we've seen further domestic draconian legislation being put through; more Muslim countries have been invaded and bombed; yet we still insist, or some within our community still insist, that condemning and apologising is the way forward.

And then there is... to take the individuals that have been invited onto the media, to take you off on a tangent it becomes a case of: Well do you condemn the beheadings? Do you condemn the *hudud*, ['punishment'] that *Allah (subhanahu wa ta'ala)* revealed in the Qur'an? Do you condemn this, do you condemn that? But hold up. Just hold up. What makes you the default position when it comes to morality? How about you condemn the invasion of Iraq; the invasion of Afghanistan; the unequivocal support for Israel; the unequivocal support for brutal dictators; the selling of weapons to these regimes; Guantanamo Bay; Bagram; Abu Ghraib; centuries of colonisation; how about you condemn those events.

I'll conclude with a *hadith* ['reported speech of the Prophet'] from Prophet Muhammad *salla illahu alay-hi wa-sallam*, when he said, "There will come a time in my *ummah*, when the one who remain steadfast and patient upon the *deen* will be like holding onto hot coals". Indeed this is that time. Support CAGE, support one another, put our differences aside. Our land is one, our war is one, our peace is one. United we stand, divided we fall.

### 4.3. Conclusion

A common theme among the speakers was the assertion that both British Muslims and Islamic belief and practice are under attack from government targeting and discrimination. In response, CAGE was characterised as a group that should be supported for undertaking a religious duty incumbent on all Muslims to defend their co-religionists.

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<sup>113</sup> Ware, J., 'The British Muslims not afraid to fight extremism', *Independent*, 18 January 2015, available at [www.independent.co.uk/voices/the-british-muslims-not-afraid-to-fight-extremism-9985531.html](http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/the-british-muslims-not-afraid-to-fight-extremism-9985531.html), last visited: 17 March 2015.

### About the Author

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The Centre for the Response to Radicalisation and Terrorism (CRT) at The Henry Jackson Society provides top-quality, in-depth research and delivers targeted, tangible and impactful activities to combat the threats from radical ideologies and terrorism at home and abroad.



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