

Arena families slam Charity Commission for refusing to reveal post-bomb action plan for Didsbury Mosque

From the [Manchester Evening News](#) and [Yahoo News](#)

A senior lawyer who represents the largest group of families affected by the [Manchester Arena](#) terror attack has criticised the Charity Commission for refusing to reveal details of a post-bomb action plan it drew up for a mosque attended by suicide bomber and his family.

Suicide bomber Salman Abedi and his jailed accomplice brother Hashem attended Didsbury Mosque while their older brother Ismail, who has fled the country, volunteered in the mosque's Arabic school. Their father Ramadan had performed the call to prayer while their mother Samia Tabbal taught there briefly. The family also attended other mosques.

Last year's third and final report of the public inquiry into the 2017 bombing, which claimed 22 lives and left hundreds of others seriously hurt, concluded Didsbury Mosque was not an 'active factor or cause' in the radicalisation of suicide bomber Salman Abedi or brother Hashem. *The pertinent inquiry is how far did the Abedi family go in radicalising others who may, even now, be plotting the next jihad atrocity?*

But leaders of the Burton Road venue were [guilty of 'wilful blindness'](#) to highly-charged political debate at the mosque about the conflict raging in Libya before the atrocity, inquiry chairman Sir John Saunders concluded. He criticised the 'unreliable' evidence of Fawzi Haffar, the chair of trustees at Didsbury Mosque, who he said 'tended to downplay the strength of the links between the mosque and the Abedi

family’.

The Charity Commission issued the mosque, also known as the Manchester Islamic Centre, with an action plan in 2018, which the commission said was to be completed by 2019. Shortly after the final inquiry report was published, the Manchester Evening News used freedom of information legislation to request the action plan as well as any progress against the actions requested, arguing this would help public confidence in the work of the commission and also potentially public confidence in the mosque.

The Charity Commission turned down the request and also refused an appeal, arguing disclosure would have a ‘prejudicial and chilling effect’ on dialogue with mosque trustees and ‘seriously undermine’ confidence in correspondence it has with the mosque remaining private.



Fawzi Haffar was found to have given 'unreliable' evidence to the public inquiry (Image: PA)

Neither Mr Haffar nor any other officials at the mosque commented when approached by the M.E.N. The mosque said it would not provide the 2018 action plan.

Last year Mr Haffar, asked if the mosque was getting protection or whether he feared attacks on the mosque, told 5Pillars YouTube channel: “Absolutely. As a matter-of-fact right wing elements have been saying many things on social media for the last few days. . . we will protect our

institute and we will protect our place of worship until hopefully the security services will be able to stop these bad right-wing influences on our place of worship.”

He denied Didsbury was a ‘radical’ mosque and said it was a centre for ‘mainstream Islam’.

Richard Scorer, a solicitor acting for some of the victims’ families, has called for transparency. *He* said the watchdog had been “unnecessarily secretive.”

He told BBC North West Tonight: “The public inquiry had made some serious criticisms of what had happened at this mosque and it made very serious criticism of the chair who remains in post despite those criticisms.”

The solicitor added that it was in the “public interest” whether the criticism was addressed. He also said: “It is important we have transparency.”

Mr Scorer rejected the commission’s assertion that a lack of public disclosure enabled a full discussion of the problems at the mosque.

He said: “I don’t accept that explanation – if the mosque was seriously engaged it can be open and transparent.”