

Cage: the extremists peddling lies to British Muslims to turn them into supporters of terror

Andrew Gilligan in the [explain how Mohammed Emwazi, "Jihadi John", was the real victim of recent events in Syria](#), you could almost hear the nation's collective intake of breath.

Being turned back on his travels and questioned by the security services had, it seemed, left Emwazi with no alternative but to join Islamic State and behead seven innocent people. Further oppression by the UK's apparatus of government terror included giving him a university education, his family a council flat and not actually arresting or detaining him for anything.

In most of Britain, these messages from Cage's parallel universe were received with shock and contempt. But the unfortunate truth is that they have significant traction with parts of its target audience.

For Cage is no collection of isolated loonies. As The Telegraph will describe here, it is part of a closely connected network of extremists relentlessly – and successfully – lying to young British Muslims that they are hated and persecuted by their fellow citizens in order to make them into supporters of terror. Cage has an active outreach programme in mosques, universities and community groups. Even more disturbingly, it continues to be treated as a credible partner by respected and respectable organisations, including Liberty and Amnesty International.

But long before its whitewashing of Jihadi John, Cage was also, quite clearly, a terrorism advocacy group. It campaigns for actual terrorists convicted not by kangaroo courts but by juries, on strong evidence, in properly conducted trials. It even campaigns for some terrorists who actually pleaded guilty – such as Mohammed Ahmed and Yusuf Sarwar, two friends from Birmingham sentenced to more than 12 years each last December after travelling to Syria.

On Sept 25 ... Cage issued a press release attacking that day's "cynically timed police raids" against "a group that is well known for its outspoken views on UK foreign policy". It said the raids were part of a "coordinated campaign orchestrated by the government" to promote its "hawkish stance" on Syria. It unfortunately forgot to mention the name of the "outspoken" group which had been raided. It was al-Muhajiroun – a banned organisation formerly headed in the UK by Anjem Choudary and now linked to about a fifth of all terrorism convictions in Britain, including the murder of Drummer Lee Rigby.

Other Cage favourites include Abu Qatada, the al-Qaeda cleric Anwar al-Awlaki – linked to at least a dozen terrorist attacks – and Boko Haram, the Nigerian Islamist group which abducted 275 schoolgirls (the Bring Back Our Girls campaign is a "colonial trope" and criticism of Boko Haram is about "demonising Islam", according to the Cage website.)

Emwazi was a student at the University of Westminster – and it is there that he may have been radicalised. The university, a hotbed of Islamist extremism in the past, has hosted at least 50 radical speakers in the past eight years, including Awlaki and Begg.

Only last week, it was due to receive Haitham al-Haddad, one of the country's most notorious non-violent extremists, with whom Cage also has links.

Haddad, who has called Jews the "brethren of swine and pigs",

runs the Muslim Research and Development Foundation, based in the same East London street as Cage. The two organisations recently ran a joint campaign against the new Counter-Terrorism and Security Bill, now passed into law.

Other partners in the campaign are the extremist group Hizb ut-Tahrir, which believes that voting is forbidden, and the Islamic Education and Research Academy (IERA), which has links to some Syrian jihadis and sends extremist speakers around the country. Two weeks ago, IERA and Cage held a joint event on “the limits of free speech” at which large sections of the audience applauded a call for apostates to be executed, according to Dan Hodges, one of the participants.

Non-student young people are targeted, too. Cage’s managing director, Muhammad Rabbani, is a former senior activist in the extremist Islamic Forum of Europe (IFE), based at the East London Mosque. Cage has held events at the mosque. Mr Rabbani was also the gang outreach co-ordinator at the Osmani Trust, another IFE front which is accused of recruiting gang members to the IFE. Cage is based in the same building as Claystone, a new Islamist group closely linked to Haddad which pushes the same themes as Cage

But perhaps its most interesting links are with the mainstream liberal-left. Amnesty International, the human rights group, claims it has stopped working with Mr Begg after one of its key activists resigned in 2010 in protest at its links with Cage. But it is still working with Cage.