

Free Speech Union seeks investigation of Wakefield Mosque

Announced [on Twitter this](#) morning. The [letter was sent](#) yesterday.

These are the main points.

I am writing to you in my capacity as General Secretary of the Free Speech Union, a non-partisan, mass membership public interest body that stands up for the speech rights of its members and campaigns for free speech more widely.

This letter sets out our concerns about Jamia Masjid Swafia, a registered charity, for its actions in connection with the widely reported events at Kettlethorpe High School in Wakefield. We are asking that you investigate the charity on the basis of the complaint set out below.

Background

Readers, you will have read about this [here](#), and [here](#), and from your own reading of the national and local news.

A 'community meeting' took place at Jamia Masjid Swafia on 24 February 2023 to address the concerns of Muslims in Wakefield and the surrounding area that was supposedly prompted by this incident. This was attended by Imam Hafiz Muhammad Mateen Anwar of the mosque, Chief Inspector Andy Thornton and Inspector Glenn Costello of West Yorkshire Police, Headteacher Tudor Griffiths, and Councillor Akef Akbar, along with an additional representative of the Jamia Masjid Swafia. The boy's mother also attended wearing a hijab, although she is not a Muslim. The comments made before, during

and after this event are
the reason we are making this complaint.

Before the meeting took place the Imam stated in a video posted to Facebook on 24 February “each and every one of you” watching was required to attend, including women, for whom special arrangements would be made within the mosque.

We have reviewed the video of the “community meeting” in its entirety, and we anticipate that you will share our alarm at statements made by the imam on behalf of the mosque. They include:

- There will be no toleration whatsoever of any person shouting out or saying anything which is of an offensive or rude nature which is not from the teachings of our beloved prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him. (Our emphasis)
- When it comes to the honour of the Quran we will stand and we will defend the honour of the Quran no matter what it takes. (Our emphasis)
- The slightest bit of disrespect [to the Quran] is not accepted and it is not going to be tolerated at any point, in any city, in any country by any Muslim and that’s the fact of the matter. (Our emphasis)
- The difficulty that we have in this incident is that these are not adults that have carried out this act. Had it been, for example, a teacher who had disrespected the holy Quran. Had it been, let’s say, an adult that had thrown the holy Quran, then the matter would be different. We probably wouldn’t be sitting in the [mosque] right now, we’d probably be standing outside that school and voicing our concerns without any doubt whatsoever. (Our emphasis)

The Free Speech Union remind the CEO of the Charity Commission of the teacher in nearby Batley who lives elsewhere under a false identity and express the opinion that the Imam's remarks are 'loaded with malice'.

This next bit is new to me, and I find it quite chilling. I sympathise with the mother donning a hijab and asking the worshipers to forgive her son so as to deflect the death threats, but there is no way I would have allowed members of the mosque into my home to 'question' my child. Who on earth persuaded her that this was a good idea? The headmaster or the police?

Councillor Akbar and a member of the mosque had attended the child's home to verify that he was indeed autistic. Councillor Akbar then confirmed this to the attendees at the mosque, and proceeded to describe quizzing the boy about what he had learnt since the incident and testing his knowledge of Islam ("we tested him a little bit, what have you learnt, what have you learnt from your research")

It is deeply disturbing that Akbar, using the premises of a registered charity, praised the boy's mother for not pressing charges after her son's life had been threatened and excused the making of death threats as mere "passions". Such was the mortal threat the mother felt her son faced, and given the Imam's insistence that "all" members of the mosque's congregation must attend at meeting in which he emphasised how there should be "no toleration whatsoever" for anyone saying something offensive to Muslims, the mother had little choice but to attend. Following this, the Imam continued to make additional incendiary statements:

- Let me make categorically clear and those who prayed Friday prayers here today will have heard my Friday sermon and my lecture too, that any

Muslim in Wakefield,
Halifax where I am from, Bradford, Dewsbury, the United
Kingdom or outside the
United Kingdom will never tolerate the disrespect of the holy
Quran. Never. Why?

Because we will sacrifice our lives for it. We will give
anything in the honour of Allah
and his messengers... So there's no element of brushing this
under the carpet.

There's no element of let it pass for a few days and then it
die down. (Our emphasis)

– But we don't let this go. We don't just say... it's nothing.
No, the reason why we've

arranged all this, the reason why I travelled early hours in
the morning this morning

to attend this meeting is because the Quran is more important
to us than our lives.

(Our emphasis)

– There's no element of brushing this under the carpet and I'm
sure our esteemed
guests are fully aware of that. (Our emphasis)

Given that the charity operates, according to your records, in
Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan – where
blasphemy is or has been severely punished, through judicial
murder, terrorism or mob violence – the threat
inherent in these words could not be more explicit.

The Imam, despite stressing that Islam is a religion of peace,
then stated, "When the prophet Muhammad
peace be upon him announced his prophethood and he began
propagating the religion of Islam one day he
left his home to propagate and to invite people to the
religion of Islam, the early days, and he returned home
full of blood."

Following the event, the mosque posted on Facebook: "We hope
this serves as an educational learning curve

for those not familiar with Islam and also serves as a means of guidance for us all.”

It was afterwards reported that the boy had been moved to a secret location for his safety.

Mr Young of the Free Speech Union then sets out the purported charitable aims of the mosque and how these threats have breached those objects. I recommend you follow the link rather than me cut and paste it all here.

Stating that criticism of Islam is “not going to be tolerated at any point” – even if it falls well within the law – is manifestly an expression of an extreme religious ideology.

Further action

The public can have no confidence in Jamia Masjid Swafia to act in furtherance of its charitable objects if it tolerates its employees and representatives using such menacing and intimidating language, effectively using the threat of mob violence to enforce Sharia Law in Wakefield and elsewhere with respect to the Quran.

Given the seriousness of these allegations, we ask that you open an investigation into the charity immediately.

Yours sincerely

I'll keep an eye on what happens. There are people curious about the background and associates of Hafiz Muhammad Mateen Anwar but so far there is nothing untoward.