

# London imam claims 'Zionists' were behind far-right riots

*Not 'far-right', just not far wrong. However the newspapers have certain rules they have to abide by. From the [Times](#)*



Ashraf Dabous made the comments in a sermon uploaded to YouTube

Ashraf Dabous, of the Lewisham Islamic Centre, said that riot participants were being “manipulated and misguided” so that supporters of the state of Israel could cast aspersions on Muslims.

Similar claims have been made since by Press TV, Iran’s state-funded channel, which reported on the hard-right agitators’ “multiple connections to the Zionist entity”.

Dabous has been deputy imam at Lewisham since 2017. The mosque attracted controversy a year earlier when its head imam, Shakeel Begg, was found by a High Court judge to have espoused extremist positions and “encouraged religious violence”.

Dabous made his comments about the riots during a Friday sermon that was posted on the mosque’s YouTube channel on August 9, days of violence prompted by online misinformation (*the information was wrong about the religion and status of the defendant; right about his immigrant heritage*) after the killing of three girls in a knife attack in Southport.

He went on: “It’s quite well known now publicly, due to information that has been released online, that their manipulators are Zionists and they are supporters of the state of Israel.

“With ground that has been lost over the past few months, something had to take place that would try to win some ground

back for the Zionist agenda. What a better way than to paint the Muslims being savages and killers and barbaric, which in reality is a projection of the Zionist state itself.

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The mosque, which did not respond to a request for comment, has been the subject of scrutiny in recent months after it was linked in March to the Conservative government’s latest extremism crackdown.

It then emerged that [Begg was still active in the mosque](#), hosting discussions with local primary school children.

The Times reported in April that the mosque had [hosted a preacher](#) who railed against “Zionists running schools and hospitals” and had questioned the extent of the Hamas atrocities on October 7.