

# Manchester Arena Inquiry: Families slam Didsbury mosque for 'failing to challenge extremist ideology'

*this is quite brave; the first time I can remember the bereaved of a terror attack being allowed to stand up and publicly criticise anything Islamic, albeit with the usual caveats. From the [Manchester Evening News](#) and the [BBC](#)*

Families bereaved in the Manchester Arena terror attack have accused Didsbury Mosque of failing 'in the years before the bombing to take adequate steps to challenge extremist ideology'.

Suicide bomber Salman Abedi and his now-convicted brother, Hashem Abedi, attended there as youngsters and their father, Ramadan Abedi, performed the call to prayer. Ismail Abedi, the elder brother, volunteered in the mosque's Arabic school – and their mother taught there briefly.

The families said in the statement: "We have absolutely no doubt that the vast majority of Muslims in this country are peace loving, law abiding and totally opposed to terrorism. *(the usual caveat)* Where pockets of extremism and violent ideology exist, it is imperative that those who seek community leadership confront and combat that extremism without hesitation or equivocation.

✘ "Whilst there is no evidence that Manchester Islamic Centre played a direct role in radicalising Salman Abedi, it is clear that they failed in the years before the bombing to take adequate steps to challenge extremist ideology. We believe that the mosque failed to do all that it could and should have

done to combat and prevent radicalisation amongst the community it purports to serve.

“When it comes to combating terrorism and terrorist ideology, there can be no complacency and no turning a blind eye. ”

...added that the last two days of evidence “must be a wake-up call”. “We urge all communities around the country to heed the lessons of this week’s evidence, to redouble efforts to combat extremism of all kinds, and to be clear and vocal in doing so,” they said.

A former Didsbury Mosque imam has told the Manchester Arena Inquiry support for terror groups was preached there. In a statement, some of the bereaved said they were “dismayed” by the mosque’s “failure to acknowledge this”.

A trustee has [previously told the inquiry](#) the mosque was “mainstream”.

...the inquiry heard from Mohammed Saeed El-Saeiti, an imam who led prayers at the mosque during the years Salman Abedi and his family attended. He said his fellow imam Mustafa Graf had led prayers that called for victory for terrorist groups fighting in the Libyan civil war, which began in 2014.

He said Mr Graf was praying “for the terrorist groups in Benghazi, he was praying for their victory, while they were beheading civilians and beheading innocent people”.

He also said supporters of the terrorist groups were allowed to meet at the mosque in 2015 and 2016 and that after reporting concerns to the mosque’s trustees, he was told some of the “brothers” in the congregation had allowed to use the building as a venue for meetings.

The inquiry heard that Mr El-Saeiti received death threats on social media after giving a sermon against Libyan terrorist groups on the day a video was released of the [murder of](#)

[Salford aid worker Alan Henning](#) by the Islamic State group in 2014.

One man, described at the inquiry as a surgeon, grabbed the microphone from his hands, it was said. "This man was a cardiologist. I told him he should feel ashamed to defend ISIS. I did tell him in front of the congregation.

Salman Abedi's father Ramadan was among those who criticised the imam, although he did not issue a death threat. Mr El-Saeiti said after his sermon, he encountered Salman Abedi, who gave him a "hateful look".

The hearing was told some members of the congregation had also organised a petition, calling for Mr El-Saeiti's removal from office after the sermon. The petition was signed by Salman Abedi's brothers Hashem, who was jailed for life in 2020 for his part in the Manchester bombing, and Ismail. Another signatory was the father of an 'al-Qaeda fighter' who died overseas, the inquiry heard.

[Reacting to the claims, Didsbury Mosque](#) said they "unreservedly condemn" all acts of hate and terror.

They added that no evidence was ever presented that suggested a link between the radicalisation of Salman Abedi and the mosque, and that had trustees been aware of such extremism, they would have reported it to the police.

The mosque also confirmed that Mohammed El-Saeiti had been made redundant from his position at the Manchester Islamic Centre, and that an ongoing industrial tribunal case is ongoing.

They stated that the mosque disputed the evidence that Mr El-Saeiti gave to the inquiry.

*Further they say* "Didsbury Mosque has worked very closely with the local police and Prevent as demonstrated by a seminar that

was held at the mosque prior to the Manchester Arena bombing. . . The Libyan factionalism arising out of the Libyan revolution also existed among the Muslim community in Manchester. On a few occasions, it spilled over into the mosque among staff and congregation, we have had to manage that.

“Mr Saeiti was made redundant from the mosque in August 2020 after a restructuring process and there is an ongoing industrial tribunal case, so we are unable to comment further on the matter other than to say that the mosque disputes what he has said and has not been given the opportunity to cross examine or test his evidence and as such, it remains his opinion only.”

*As one of the comments that hasn't been deleted points out Ed Hussein visited Didsbury Mosque in 2019. He saw books promoting terror openly available to the congregation. [Among the Mosques](#), Ed Husain Chapter 2 Manchester page 53.*