

# Mohammed film protest backer is government's Islamophobia adviser

*Not just the rabble rouser from outside the schools; a senior imam and government advisor. The government really must be careful who they listen to. So far as I can tell Imam Qari Asim has not been in the crowd outside a cinema himself shouting the odds. But he approves of those who have been.*

One of the figures agitating for cinemas to cancel a film accused of “blasphemy” is the Government’s adviser on Islamophobia, [The Telegraph](#) can reveal.

It has emerged that one of the figures lobbying for screenings to be cancelled is Imam Qari Asim, an independent government advisor on Islamophobia, who has branded the film “derogatory”.

The Head Imam of the Makkah mosque in Leeds has backed those protesting against the film and asked cinemas to drop the £12million production, which has become the centre of a free speech row in the UK.



Imam Qari Asim says the movie has 'caused much pain and hurt to Muslims'

Amid widespread protests, Mr Asim posted an online statement critical of the Lady of Heaven, branding it a “disparaging movie” that has “caused much pain and hurt to Muslims”.

The statement from the imam, and deputy chair of the Government's anti-muslim hatred working group, adds: "We have been working with many brothers and imams across the country to liaise with the cinemas.

"As a community, in some places we have been successful and those cinemas will no longer be showing the movie, in other places negotiations are still ongoing.

"Some imams have taken a view to protest and others are in dialogue with the cinemas trying to resolve the situation. Different approaches, rooted in our universal values, are necessary, as always."

Mr Asim – who in the past has suggested showing pictures of the Prophet should be socially unacceptable as the N-word – has added to the criticism of the film, stating: "All agree that the movie is derogatory, and uses sectarian and racist narratives...."

*Sectarian naratives are in evidence at the demonstrations:* Deobandi cleric Abdul Haleem . . . delivered a speech during protests outside the Vue cinemas in Leeds . . . *(that speech)* was reported to have begun with him calling the film's writer Sheikh al-Habib a "dirty pig", and was later greeted by shouts of "Shia infidels" from the crowd.