

# Police probe at Birmingham mosque as visiting imam 'praises murderer' in New Year sermon

From the [Birmingham Mail](#)

Central Jamia Mosque Ghamkol Sharif, one of the biggest mosques in the city, is in the spotlight again after a visiting imam invited to lead prayers during an event allegedly praised executed killer Mumtaz Qadri.

West Midlands Police are investigating after complaints were raised about the contents of a preacher's sermon at a New Year event at one of the city's biggest mosques.

A visiting imam, speaking at Central Jamia Mosque Ghamkol Sharif in Small Heath, was heard to allegedly praise murderer Mumtaz Qadri, who gunned down Pakistani politician Salman Taseer in cold blood and was later convicted of murder and executed for the crime. . . the imam, understood to be visiting from Pakistan, refers to Qadri as "Ghazi" – an Urdu word meaning powerful and interpreted when used to preface someone's name as meaning 'brave warrior'.

Speaking in Urdu to male worshippers inside the mosque's grand main hall, he refers to people who are the 'likes and high standards' of 'Ghazi Il-Muddin' and 'Ghazi Mumtaz Qadri' who 'left from this world',

One of those who viewed the livestream – posted on Facebook and seen by Birmingham Live – said he was appalled to hear the preacher speak positively about Qadri's actions.

He said: "When Qadri was convicted and then later executed for

this murder five years ago, the reaction of the leaders at this same mosque, Ghamkol Sharif, was to promote an event to celebrate his life. Rightly they were condemned and pledged to change. Now here we have this again, it is just disgraceful.”



Salman Taseer was the Governor of Punjab and a respected businessman, who called for changes to Pakistan’s harsh blasphemy laws and urged a pardon for a Pakistani Christian woman, Asia Bibi, who had been condemned to death. His stance put him at odds with some fellow Muslims and he was assassinated by Qadri, a member of his own security detail, who shot him 27 times with an AK-47 before surrendering to the police.

Paul Salahuddin Armstrong, managing director of the Association of British Muslims and Muslim chaplain at the University of Birmingham, spoke out strongly in 2016 about their apparent support. He said today he was ‘very disappointed’ at the visiting imam’s words and called on the mosque leaders to condemn them. “It is grossly irresponsible and foolish to suggest this man is a martyr, in any sense.”

He said after viewing the footage he had consulted with an impartial Urdu speaker to re-interpret what was said, and confirmed a clear positive reference made to Ghazi Mumtaz Qadri. He said he had attempted to contact the mosque himself, without success.

Birmingham Police Inspector Simon Graham said he had been alerted to the livestream and its contents. He said: “I’ve spoken to a senior member of the mosque committee about the event on New Year’s Day and the speech in question. We will be reviewing the video to determine if any criminal offences have been committed.”

The charity that oversees it is currently under [investigation by the Charity Commission](#) and safeguarding concerns have been

raised by Birmingham City Council. It is also nearly a year overdue in filing its accounts for 2020.

We have reached out to the mosque in a range of ways over the past 48 hours, including by email, Facebook message and phone, without success. We continue to extend an offer to provide a right of reply.