

The baroness, Islamic extremists and a question of free speech

Andrew Gilligan in the . It, too, has defended Cage, accusing the media of trying to discredit the group after the “Jihadi John” episode. It, too, has links to Haddad, who, despite his views on democracy, has appeared in a Mend video urging Muslims to vote. He has said in the past that voting may be permissible to return a Muslim majority government in “50 years, something like this” as a prelude to “Islam spreading all over the world”.

Mend is next month launching an election tour, to “reinforce the importance of electoral participation” and encourage Muslims to go to the ballot box. A star speaker at five of the six events listed will be Abu Eesa Niamatullah, another British extremist who opposes democracy.

In a YouTube talk seen by the Telegraph, Mr Niamatullah attacked “the inherent weakness of democracy” because “it’s all down to the masses, to the people, to decide what is right and what is wrong”. Mr Niamatullah said that the people of Britain were “animals ...

On April 3 in Manchester, one of the speakers booked to appear alongside Mr Niamatullah is Baroness Warsi, the former Tory chairman and the first Muslim woman to sit in Cabinet. Let us hope she has not read his views on women in the workplace from the “Prophetic Guidance” website. “I am an absolute extremist in this issue in that I don’t have any time for the opposing arguments,” he wrote.

“Women should not be in the workplace whatsoever. Full stop. I simply can’t imagine how we will safeguard our Islamic

identity in the future and build strong Muslim communities in the West with women wanting to go out and becoming employed in the hell that it is out there.”

Even carrying money in your pocket is “entirely unacceptable from a fiqhi [Islamic law] point of view”, according to Mr Niamatullah since there are “pictures of a non-mahram [forbidden] woman” – the Queen – on the banknotes, though he has “regretfully” conceded that this particular rule must be broken if daily life is to remain possible.

Other avowed Mend democrats include Azad Ali, the group’s head of community development and engagement, who has written of his “love” for Anwar al-Awlaki, the al-Qaeda recruiter; said that the Mumbai attacks were “not terrorism”; justified the killing of British troops and stated that “democracy, if it means at the expense of not implementing the Sharia, of course nobody agrees with that”.

Mend itself is a rebranding of a group called Engage, or iEngage, which was removed as secretariat to the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Islamophobia in 2011 after The Sunday Telegraph revealed its links with extremism. The name change appears to have been enough to fool many MPs and official bodies.

Mend also appears dramatically better funded than in its Engage days, doubling its claimed number of staff and hiring regional co-ordinators across England. Much of Mend’s money may come from the proceeds of tax avoidance.

So why are Mend and YouElect urging Muslims to participate in a system which many of the two organisations’ key figures fundamentally reject?

One clue may come in Mr Niamatullah’s speech, in which he said that Muslims should act as an “underground movement?... to affect and influence people”.

Mr Ali's day job is as a community affairs co-ordinator for the Islamic Forum of Europe (IFE), an extremist group based at the East London Mosque, which wants to create a Sharia state in Europe.

According to a training session for recruits, the IFE's goal is "not simply to give da'wah [call to the faith]. Our goal is to create the True Believer, to then mobilise those believers into an organised force for change who will carry out da'wah, hisbah [enforcement of Islamic law] and jihad. This will lead to social change and iqamatud-Deen [an Islamic social, economic and political order]". IFE's "entryism" helped to install Lutfur Rahman as the Labour leader of Tower Hamlets council. He then gave them millions of pounds in grants. Mend also appears to have been funded by Tower Hamlets. Mr Rahman was expelled from the Labour Party, but re-elected as an independent, with IFE help. He represents Islamism's closest ally in UK political office.

Mend and the IFE cannot, of course, hope to replicate their success in heavily Muslim Tower Hamlets across the UK. But by building links with an unsuspecting political establishment, they can further the Islamist agenda.