

Mayor's Dossier on al-Qaradawi Distorts the Truth

This 10-point summary refutes key claims by the Mayor of London in defence of his invitation to the Muslim cleric Dr Yusuf al-Qaradawi last July to City Hall.

In response to the Mayor's embrace of Dr al-Qaradawi, a coalition of London community groups requested a meeting with the Mayor to express their concerns. The Mayor refused to meet them, so they issued a briefing citing al-Qaradawi's anti-Semitism, homophobia, misogyny and support for other human-rights abuses.

The Mayor responded with a counter-dossier that included factually untrue claims in defence of Dr al-Qaradawi and grave misrepresentations concerning the London community coalition.

To expose the Mayor's distortion of the truth, we present this 10-point refutation.

In this 10-point summary, all quotations are taken directly from Dr al-Qaradawi as published on the website that he supervises, <http://www.islamonline.net>. They are presented on this website in English, so there can be no question about the accuracy of the translations.

It is also important to note that not only are the documents used on the website with Dr al-Qaradawi's permission, but he is also the chief scholar who supervises the content of the website.

“Our goal is for this site to be worthy of your trust. To reach our goal, a committee of the major scholars throughout the Islamic world, headed by Dr. Yusuf Qardawi (sic), was formed. Its role is to ensure that nothing on this site violates the fixed principles of Islamic law (Shar'ia).”

See: <http://www.islamonline.net/english/aboutus.shtml>

It is our hope in providing this document that those concerned with the truth about al-Qaradawi can go to the source material themselves, see for themselves and judge for themselves.

These are just 10 examples of misrepresentations and distortions in Ken Livingstone's reply to the London community coalition briefing submitted to him on Dr al-Qaradawi. There are many more, but 10 is more than enough to digest.

In his own words, Dr Yusuf al-Qaradawi supports:

- 1 The killing of homosexuals to keep society pure
- 2 The killing of Apostates – those who have rejected Islam
- 3 The killing of all Israelis – including civilians
- 4 The mutilation of women's genitals

1.

LIVINGSTONE'S CLAIM:

The Mayor claims Dr al-Qaradawi is one of the Muslim scholars who have done the most to combat socially regressive interpretations of Islam on issues such as women's rights.

THE TRUTH:

Dr al-Qaradawi supports the killing of people who have turned away from Islam ("apostates").

In a fatwa issued in June 2003 concerning organ donation, Dr al-Qaradawi stated: "it is not permissible to donate it to an apostate as he is no more than a traitor to his religion and his people and thus deserves killing."

See: <http://www.islamonline.net/fatwa/english/FatwaDisplay.asp?hFatwaID=49276>

Dr al-Qaradawi supports female genital mutilation (female "circumcision").

He says that, while it is not obligatory, "whoever finds it serving the interest of his daughters should do it, and I personally support this under the current circumstances in the modern world."

See: <http://www.islamonline.net/fatwa/english/FatwaDisplay.asp?hFatwaID=31397>

Dr al-Qaradawi insists that a husband must compel his wife to wear the hijab.

"It is unanimously agreed upon among Muslim scholars that it is not lawful for a Muslim woman to uncover any part of her body other than the face and hands (and the feet according to some schools of jurisprudence). Hence, it is unlawful for a woman to reveal her hair, or arms, or chest or legs before non-*mahram* men. Wearing clothes that reveal such parts of a woman's body is completely forbidden. A Muslim husband is to order his wife to wear hijab."

See: <http://www.islamonline.net/fatwa/english/FatwaDisplay.asp?hFatwaID=108163>

Dr al-Qaradawi sanctions domestic violence in certain circumstances.

"If the husband senses that feelings of disobedience and rebelliousness are rising against him in his wife, he should try his best to rectify her attitude by kind words, gentle persuasion, and reasoning with her. If this is not helpful, he should sleep apart from her, trying to awaken her agreeable feminine nature so that serenity may be restored and she may respond to him in a harmonious fashion. If this approach fails, it is permissible for him to admonish her lightly with his hands, avoiding her face and other sensitive areas."

See: <http://www.islamonline.net/fatwa/english/FatwaDisplay.asp?hFatwaID=7061>

2.

LIVINGSTONE'S CLAIM:

The Mayor claims al-Qaradawi is described as a supporter of terrorism, when, in reality, he has been one of the most forthright Islamic scholars condemning terrorism.

THE TRUTH:

Al-Qaradawi supports targeting Israeli civilians.

Sheikh Mohammad Sayyed Tantawi, sheikh of Cairo's al-Azhar University, said Monday that Islamic Shari'ah law, "rejects all attempts on human life, and in the name of Shari'ah we condemn all attacks on civilians, whatever the community or state responsible for such an attack ... We disapprove of all those who justify attacks against children by reasoning that the children will join the army when they grow up."

Qaradawi, however, angrily disagreed. He argued:

"Has fighting colonizers become a criminal and terrorist act for some sheikhs?" He added that Israeli society "was completely military in its make-up and did not include any civilians. In Israel, men and women are soldiers," added al-Qaradawi. "They are all occupying soldiers."

See: <http://www.islamonline.org/English/News/2001-12/05/article6.shtml>

Qaradawi supports suicide bombing (including by women).

"Thus, women's participation in the martyr operations carried out in Palestine – given the status of the land as an occupied territory, in addition to a lot of sacrilegious acts perpetrated by the Jews against the sanctuaries – is one of the most praised acts of worship."

See: <http://islamonline.net/fatwaapplication/english/display.asp?hFatwaID=68511>

3.

LIVINGSTONE'S CLAIM:

The Mayor claims that Sikh groups distanced themselves from the dossier because "no evidence was produced by the authors to back up their claims that Qaradawi backs forced conversion to Islam".

THE TRUTH:

The section making that claim was inserted by the Sikh groups themselves. It is their own claim, no one else's. If they do not have evidence to back it up, that is their own failing. Livingstone makes it seem as if those claims were made on behalf of Sikh groups but rejected by them, when the truth is that the Sikh groups made those claims themselves and submitted them for inclusion

in the dossier, which was collaboratively compiled by the various community groups involved.

4.

LIVINGSTONE'S CLAIM:

The Mayor claims no Muslim group was associated with the document.

THE TRUTH:

The Gay Muslim group Imaan were party to the discussions all along. They dropped out only right at the end due to internal politics and after the Mayor had offered them a separate meeting to discuss their concerns.

Livingstone also favourably quotes a condemnation of the London community coalition's criticisms of Dr al-Qaradawi from a discussion board on Imaan's website. He claims it was typical of Imaan's views and fails to acknowledge that the passage he quotes is from one person taking one position. He does not mention that it was this one person, Bilal Patel, who posted 9 of the 22 posts in the discussion. Nevertheless, one of the other members challenged Mr Patel, saying:

“If your objective is a dialogue leading with, leading to acceptance by, the Ummah on behalf of Gay Muslims, then sooner or later you are going to have to take on and defeat the views preached by Imams such as Qaradawi ...”

To which Mr Patel answered: “Agreed about taking on Qaradawi's views.”

Thus, Imaan's last-minute withdrawal from the London community coalition seems to have been an issue of strategy – *not*, as the Mayor attempts to persuade us, because they disagreed that Dr al-Qaradawi was antigay or that he should not be challenged.

Furthermore, Ken Livingstone fails to mention that he had previously been in correspondence with Imaan over the al-Qaradawi issue and that they had criticised his decision to invite Dr al-Qaradawi. His reply to them is archived on their website here:

<http://imaanlondon.f2g.net/KenReply.doc>

The Mayor also chose to ignore former Muslims and liberal Muslim involved in the coalition, many of whom are political dissidents from Islamic countries and have suffered death threats, beatings, imprisonment and torture at the hands of fundamentalists.

5.

LIVINGSTONE'S CLAIM:

The Mayor claims that al-Qaradawi stresses that female genital mutilation (FGM) is not required

by Islam.

THE TRUTH:

This is true, but the issue was never whether al-Qaradawi thought FGM was compulsory. The issue is that he personally recommends it, which he does:

“whoever finds it [FGM] serving the interest of his daughters should do it, and I personally support this under the current circumstances in the modern world.”

See: <http://www.islamonline.net/fatwa/english/FatwaDisplay.asp?hFatwaID=31397>

6.

LIVINGSTONE’S CLAIM:

The Mayor says the coalition’s briefing contains Islamophobic statements that are evidence of a “conspiracy theory of Islam”.

THE TRUTH:

The London community coalition’s briefing does not condemn anyone because of their race or faith. Indeed, many of the coalition members are people of faith. Some are Muslims.

The Mayor’s dossier does not attribute quotations and allows the reader to believe they were made by the compilers of the coalition’s briefing.

Livingstone quotes two statements from the coalition’s briefing as evidence of an anti-Muslim conspiracy: “The issue of the hijab was being presented as a first step on a long path of religious duties culminating in ‘Jihad’ ...” and “This fake Islamic Hijab is nothing but a political prop ...”

What the Mayor doesn’t say is that these quotations are from, Abd Al-Mun’im Sa’id, director of the Al Ahram Centre for Political and Islamic Studies, and the Iranian author Amir Taheri respectively. But the Mayor’s dossier insinuates that these quotations are from non-Muslim Islamophobes.

Far from being Islamophobic, the London community coalition has right from the outset made clear its objection to anti-Muslim prejudice; and that its criticisms apply only to Dr al-Qaradawi (and not to Muslims in general).

The coalition’s al-Qaradawi briefing states:

“We condemn all forms of prejudice or discrimination against Muslim people, utterly and without qualification.”

Additionally, the London community coalition cited a petition delivered to the United Nations on 30 October 2004, signed by over 2,500 of the world’s leading Muslim intellectuals from 23

countries. The petition names al-Qaradawi as one of ‘the theologians of terror’, accusing him of ‘providing a religious cover for terrorism’. These Muslim critics cannot be dismissed as Islamophobes.

Many refugees from Islamist repression in the Arab world condemn al-Qaradawi as an apologist for “Islamofascism”. They accuse him of opposing democracy, socialism and human rights. The apparently liberal opinions al-Qaradawi espouses when he visits western capitals are just a front, they say, designed to fool and seduce politicians like the Mayor of London. His true beliefs are the hard-line fundamentalism he preaches in Arabic to Middle Eastern audiences when no western journalists or politicians are present.

Arab News points out that al-Qaradawi's gentle words in London "don't match" the extremism he preaches in the Middle East. Undeterred, Livingstone denies the evidence and continues to side with al-Qaradawi against liberal and left-wing Muslims.

The Mayor has denounced Peter Tatchell as having "a long history of Islamophobia." On the contrary, Tatchell has condemned the racism that consigns Muslim people to some of the poorest housing and jobs in Britain. He has also been a long-time supporter of the Palestinian struggle, a fierce critic of the western invasion of Iraq, and he has backed the campaign against the detention of Muslim suspects without trial in Belmarsh Prison.

7.

LIVINGSTONE'S CLAIM:

The Mayor claims Dr al-Qaradawi opposes “the repression of homosexuals”.

THE TRUTH:

In his book, *The Lawful and Prohibited in Islam*, republished recently on IslamOnline, al-Qaradawi says on the subject of homosexuality:

“Muslim jurists hold different opinions concerning the punishment for this abominable practice. Should it be the same as the punishment for fornication, or should both the active and passive participants be put to death?”

He then defends that view by adding:

“While such punishments may seem cruel, they have been suggested to maintain the purity of the Islamic society and to keep it clean of perverted elements.”

He does not condemn the view – he excuses it! The death penalty only *seems* cruel, he argues, until we understand that it is actually necessary “to keep [Islamic society] clean of perverted elements”.

See: <http://www.islamonline.net/fatwa/english/FatwaDisplay.asp?hFatwaID=100855>

The rhetoric used in the rest of al-Qaradawi's article hardly supports the Mayor's view that al-Qaradawi "opposes the repression of homosexuals".

Mayor Livingstone then points to the fact that Leviticus 20:13 also calls for the death penalty for homosexuality, asking provocatively whether that meant that the Chief Rabbi should also be excluded from City Hall. But the Chief Rabbi did not write Leviticus, nor any papers endorsing its modern-day application. In contrast, al-Qaradawi's condemnation of homosexuality comes from his own pen!

Additionally, al-Qaradawi and his colleagues recently launched a blistering attack on the Gay Muslim group Al-Fatiha and tried to block gay organisations from participating in a United Nations meeting on HIV/AIDS.

See: <http://www.islam-online.net/english/News/2001-06/27/article4.shtml>

8.

LIVINGSTONE'S CLAIM:

The Mayor claims Peter Tatchell cites Islam as "uniquely reactionary" on lesbian and gay issues.

THE TRUTH:

Peter Tatchell is far better known (some might say notorious) for his confrontations with the Church of England, the Catholic Church and Christianity in general. He has been quoted as saying (more than once):

"The Church of England is an oppressive, homophobic institution. I think that any lesbian or gay person who is a part of that Church, unless they are overtly, actively campaigning to change things, are part of the problem. They are helping to sustain that historic oppression of lesbian and gay people."

And even:

"The Bible is to lesbian and gay people what *Mein Kampf* is to Jews."

Such robust criticisms of Christianity hardly support the Mayor's claim that Tatchell believes Islam is "uniquely reactionary".

Nevertheless, it is certainly a fact that today the worst abuses of lesbian and gay human rights occur in Muslim countries under Sharia law.

9.

LIVINGSTONE’S CLAIM:

The Mayor claims the Gay and Lesbian Humanist Association is sympathetic to Pim Fortuyn and is opposed to laws against incitement to racial hatred.

THE TRUTH:

First, Livingstone quoted selectively from an article in *Gay & Lesbian Humanist* magazine on Pim Fortuyn. The article does indeed acknowledge that humanists share Fortuyn’s worry that concessions to the Islamic religious lobby will erode liberal values – that, after all is a concern of all liberal secular humanisms. Dishonestly, the Mayor fails to include the sentiments of GALHA’s Terry Sanderson – quoted in the same article from *Gay & Lesbian Humanist* magazine:

“While we in no way support Pim Fortuyn’s ideas on immigration, or see any connection between immigrants and social decay ...”

GALHA may agree with Karl Marx that “religion is the opiate of the people”, but that hardly makes GALHA a communist organisation. Similarly, just because an article in the magazine acknowledges that gay humanists share Fortuyn’s concerns about antigay attitudes in Islam, it is thoroughly dishonest to imply that GALHA support the late Fortuyn’s political agenda – especially since it is *explicitly* stated in the article that GALHA does not.

Second, Livingstone claims that GALHA opposes “the new law against incitement to *racial* hatred” (our emphasis). But this is a lie. There is no new law against racial hatred. The new legislation is against inciting *religious* hatred. In other words, it is not about protecting people from hatred, but giving religious ideologies a privileged protected status.

GALHA, like many liberal commentators, including the comedian Rowan Atkinson, opposes the new law of “incitement to *religious* hatred”. It fears, quite reasonably, that the law will stifle legitimate debate and free speech about religion or criticism of religious views. Indeed, many religious groups also oppose the legislation, including the Barnabas Fund, the Christian Institute and the Evangelical Alliance.

10.

LIVINGSTONE’S CLAIM:

The Mayor claims the London community coalition opposed his dialogue with “a leader of one of the world’s great religions”, and even that the coalition opposed dialogue with the Muslim community.

THE TRUTH:

No such call was ever made by the coalition. The criticism of Ken Livingstone was over his

red-carpet treatment of Dr al-Qaradawi and his seeming endorsement of the cleric. The London community coalition positively encourages the Mayor to maintain a dialogue with all people, faiths and communities – including Muslims. But the coalition also expects him to challenge those who hold anti-humanitarian views and to not embrace those, like Dr al-Qaradawi, who explicitly endorse human rights abuses.

If you would like an electronic version of this document (with clickable links), please email brett@outrage.org.uk with a request.

The document will also be available online at:

<http://www.londoncommunitycoalition.org/mayorsdossier-thetruth.doc>

<http://www.outrage.org.uk/mayorsdossier-thetruth.doc>