

Andrew Smith
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By Fax and by Post

5th January 2007

Dear Sir,

Re: Dispatches Programme, Channel 4, Monday 15th January 2007

Thank you for your somewhat confrontational letter dated the 28th December 2007, which contains several inaccuracies which I must bring to your attention in the interests of justice and fair play.

Firstly, there was no need to send a covert reporter to ascertain who it was who appointed me as Director of the London Islamic Cultural Centre and Central Mosque (“the ICC”). The correct and normal procedure for asking questions of the director of a large institution would have been to contact my secretary by phone or e mail and make an appointment to see me. I would then have been happy to answer all of your reporter’s questions. I am sure you would agree with me that this would have been a far more civilised and productive way in which to proceed.

Turning to the points you have raised in your letter:

1. I was appointed as Director by the Board of Trustees of the London Central Mosque (and not by the Saudi Arabian government). As you probably know, the Board of Trustees comprises 23 ambassadors from different countries. The Head of the Board of Trustees is His Excellency, the Ambassador of the U.A.E and the Deputy Chairman is His Excellency, the Ambassador of Kuwait. The ICC has been serving the wider community in London and throughout the U.K for over 60 years. During the last 33 years the directors have included appointees from all over the world including Africa, Asia and the Middle East.
2. As regards finances, donations towards the upkeep of the Central Mosque have been received from individuals and countries from all over the world including Morocco, Malaysia, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bangladesh, Kuwait, Oman, and of course Great Britain.
3. In relation to the bookshop located within the ICC, the space was let according to normal commercial principles and Dar-us-Salam Publications won the tender. It is unreasonable to expect the ICC to personally examine the content of every item for sale within the bookshop. It appears to me that your reporter went looking for specific or very particular sound bytes. However, the ICC will look into the materials in question and appropriate

action will be taken if required in accordance with all relevant U.K legislation and principles.

4. It is simply inaccurate to state that the London Central Mosque has “become dominated by the influence of Saudi Arabia and its religious teachings”. I am sure that your “experts in British Islam” will confirm that the Imams of the Central Mosque hail from Egypt and are graduates of Egyptian educational institutions. Surely if your thesis was correct, they would all be from Saudi Arabia?
5. As for your assertion that ICC is associated with Mr Khalid Yasin’s Islamic Information Network Project (IIN), we would like to inform you that a project with Mr Yasin was considered many years ago but this project was never implemented. Further, this project did not involve the promotion of any discriminatory ideas in any event.
6. The ICC maintains and strengthens its already long established ties with all types of organisations within the UK. In 2005- 2006, the ICC has been actively involved with more than 50 non-Muslim organisations within the UK. We have hosted numerous meetings, as well as organising interfaith seminars and meetings on various topics, ranging from the use of Arbitration by faith communities (September 2005) to how we deal with the Dissolution of Marriage (September 2006). We also enjoy good relations with the government of the United Kingdom. It is a great honour to have been selected by the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office to be part of the managing board of the Hajj Advisory Group, and the ICC hosts the launch party annually. Recently, the Right Honourable Margaret Beckett MP attended the launch party and spoke highly of the ICC and the work that we do.

I would like to conclude by reminding you that the time limits that you have imposed upon us to reply to your queries are unreasonable and unduly burdensome. This in light of the time of year that you have chosen to contact us (the festive season). You have explained that you are in the final stages of editing a programme that followed an investigation that has lasted many months and I am surprised that your reporter did not give me sufficient time to prepare a more comprehensive response to comprise part of the content of your documentary. I would have thought that any bona fide producer would have taken the opportunity to speak to all of the people that will form part of his documentary.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Ahmed Al-Dubayan
Director General
London Islamic Cultural Centre and Central Mosque