

## **Address to Council from Mohammed Niaz Abbasi**

I am submitting this statement on behalf of the Muslim community of Oxford. I would like to highlight our concern regarding the film entitled 'Innocence of Muslims'. This film is intended to make a mockery of Islam and the prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). To hurt 1.5 billion believers around the world who hold this man Muhammad in the highest esteem is really quite shocking. What has this film actually achieved? What was it set out to achieve? Protests around the world have highlighted the deep hurt that this film has caused. Many protests have turned violence and in Libya it has cost the lives of American Diplomats, this entire scenario did not need to take place.

If your response to our complaint is that such films are allowed and encouraged under freedom of speech, and that a free press dictates the complete acceptability of such a film then my question to you is this, if a film was released mocking the Jewish or Christian tradition or any other sacred tradition at a time when relations between the tradition in question and the western world were already precarious, would the release of such a film be considered acceptable? Surely, it would be deemed irresponsible and inflammatory. Is this not the case?

Mainstream Muslims have deep respect and reverence for all of the prophets, including Jesus, Moses, Jacob, Ismail, Abraham. We consider the prophet Muhammad to be a closing seal in the line of prophet hood, throughout the Qur'an you will find deep respect for all of the prophets. Thus, an attack on the prophet Muhammad is in essence an attack on all of the prophets of the past. All of the prophets called human kind to return to their humanity and have respect for what binds us all together, our humanity. It is thus utterly unacceptable for people to mock the prophet Muhammad under the pretence of free speech and free press. The freedom to insult what others deem to be sacred is in no way beneficial to society.

The Muslim community of Oxford are eager to bridge gaps between different faiths and to promote social harmony. We hope to engender a better understanding of the various world religions. To achieve this goal, we need people working in the film and media industry as well as the politicians around the world to understand that the continuous mockery of Islam is a great hindrance to world peace. I urge the government through this council to ask the United Nations to write a code of conduct for those who try to exploit the idea of freedom of speech to further their own irresponsible agendas. The Muslims in Oxford do not tolerate disrespect towards the prophet Muhammad and I hope that we can all stand together against such disrespect.

The Muslims of Oxford also urge Muslims everywhere to behave in line with the teachings of the prophet Muhammad and to not resort to violence against civilians & ambassadors, this has been forbidden by the prophet Muhammad and will not benefit any one. I end with hope that you will read and respond to this plea with due

care and attention. We will await a response with eagerness. I close with a quote from Willam Montgomery Watt. Although, he highlighted this fact in 1953, sadly it holds true to this day. I hope we can take small step, together as a community, to change this:

“None of the great figures of history is so poorly appreciated in the West as Muhammad”

Thank you,

Cllr.M.N.Abbasi