

Imam Shakeel Begg's Statement Concerning the BBC Case

By now, many of you will be aware of the judgment issued by Mr Justice Haddon Cave in my libel claim against the British Broadcasting Corporation ("BBC").

Firstly, I am bitterly disappointed with the ruling of the High Court.

Second, and for the record, I do not accept that I am an 'extremist speaker', nor that I have 'espoused extremist views' in the past and I strongly refute any such suggestion. I have worked as an Imam and community activist for the Lewisham Islamic Centre for over 20 years. I have always worked towards peace and the betterment of humanity regardless of the faith (or lack of faith), ideology, lifestyle or political persuasion of those who I have worked with. It has been my honour to be at the forefront of community, interfaith, gang mediation, pastoral care, youth and social work within the borough of Lewisham and beyond.

Community members testify that I have been robust in attacking ideologies that contradict normative Islamic views and many supporting statements from prominent members of the local community in Lewisham were served as evidence during the Court hearing. I have publicly spoken out, in the strongest possible terms, against the atrocities of 9/11, 7/7, the Woolwich Murder of Fusilier Lee Rigby, the Charlie Hebdo Attack, ISIS and various other terrorist groups. In fact, in September 2014, I made a direct public appeal to the so called Islamic State to free British hostage Alan Henning.

My legal team and I are continuing to study the judgment very carefully and we are considering all options, including an appeal. In the meantime, it is important for the public, both Muslims and non-Muslims to understand that this is a civil case of defamation, which I pursued to restore my reputation. Even though the ruling has gone in the BBC's favour, it is important to stress that the BBC and Andrew Neil have not been 'cleared' of anything, and I have not been 'convicted' of anything.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the hundreds of people who took the time to leave messages of support. I can't thank you enough. I also thank all those who have helped bring this case to court. I thank you all for trusting in me and having full faith that I am innocent of the extremist label.

I will be making further comments regarding this issue in the near future.