



Department for Levelling Up,
Housing & Communities

Dear Imam Qari Asim,

On 23 July 2019, the Secretary of State at the time appointed you as an Independent Adviser. You are also Deputy Chair of the Government's Anti-Muslim Hatred Working Group.

We write now because we have no option but to withdraw the appointment and end your roles with Government with immediate effect. Your recent support for a campaign to limit free expression - a campaign which has itself encouraged communal tensions - means it is no longer appropriate for you to continue your work with Government in roles designed to promote community harmony.

You have encouraged an ongoing campaign to prevent cinemas screening the film "Lady of Heaven", a clear effort to restrict artistic expression, and the campaign you have supported has led to street protests which have fomented religious hatred.

You wrote on Facebook on 6 June that "We have been working with many brothers and Imams across the country to liaise with the cinemas....Some Imams have taken a view to protest and others are in dialogue with the cinemas trying to resolve the situation".

Resolving the situation, as you made clear, meant cancelling screenings. You wrote that "in some places we have been successful and those cinemas will no longer be showing the movie".

Your support for further action was made clear. You advertised "a protest [that] has been organised in Leeds" and provided details of its timing and location.

This clear involvement in a campaign to limit free expression is incompatible with the role of a government adviser.

You will have no doubt seen reports of the scenes outside different cinema venues. These included deeply disturbing videos of sectarian chanting and anti-Shia hatred. As you know, anti-Shia hatred is a long-standing and very serious issue, which must be challenged at every opportunity as part of a wider effort to combat anti-Muslim hatred. We were disappointed to see that you failed to condemn some of the protests complicit in these behaviours.

Your actions are incompatible with the role of a government adviser on anti-Muslim hatred. This country is proud of its democratic values and freedoms, which include tolerance, freedom of expression, and community.

From,

Department of Levelling Up, Housing & Communities