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Muslims and the Mayor: Who are Ken's Muslim backers? Centre for Social Cohesion Press Briefing 04 January 2008

On 3 January 2008, 63 supposedly separate individuals and Muslim organisations urged Muslim Londoners to vote for Ken Livingstone in his re-election campaign later this year. The [BBC](#) described these groups as representing 'the overwhelming majority of Muslims in London'. In fact just under half of the signatories failed to disclose their affiliation to one of two Muslim groups - the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) and the Muslim Association of Britain (MAB) - both of which have links to fundamentalist organisations. Furthermore several signatories have little or no connection to London or have been employed by the Mayor's office.

The letter, urging Muslims to vote for Ken Livingstone in the upcoming elections for the Mayor of London, was published on the Guardian's website. It [reads](#):

"Ken Livingstone has been an outstanding mayor of London. He has stood out in support of a multicultural society and has supported the Muslim communities of the city against racism and Islamophobia as well as all other minorities against all types of prejudice.

"His stands and policies have constantly championed justice in the Middle East and around the world, freedom for the Palestinians and withdrawal of occupying troops from Iraq; a rare trait of modern-day public figures.

"He has enhanced London's standing in the world and helped improve the lives of all of the city's communities.

"For those and many more traits continuously and consistently demonstrated by the Ken Livingstone, we the undersigned believe that it is in the best interest of the Muslim communities of London, and indeed all Londoners, to back Mr Livingstone in this year's mayoral elections.

Of the 63 signatories 22 of them (over a third) have worked for, represented or been backed by just two Muslim groups - the MCB, many of whose key members are closely linked to the fundamentalist Pakistani party Jamaat-e-Islam and the MAB, which is the British arm of the Muslim Brotherhood. At least 5 others have worked for other groups or mosques closely linked to these organisations.

Signatories linked to the Muslim Council of Britain

- ❖ Abdallah Faliq - Islamic Forum Europe [has [represented](#) the East London Mosque Trust in an unspecified capacity. The East London Mosque is the unofficial headquarters of the MCB]
- ❖ Ahmed Malik - Editor, Muslim Weekly [has [helped](#) MCB produce their weekly e-newsletter]
- ❖ Azad Ali - Muslim Community Radio [[Chairman](#) of MCB Membership Committee]
- ❖ Dilwar Hussain - London Muslim Centre [the London Muslim Centre is a [project](#) of the East London Mosque - itself an affiliate of the MCB]
- ❖ Dr Daud Abdullah - An Noor Masjid Acton [deputy [secretary general](#) of the MCB]
- ❖ Dr Jameel Sharif - Salaam.co.uk [A "Dr Jamil Sharif" has [spoken](#) on behalf of the MCB in an unspecified capacity]
- ❖ Inayat Bunglawala - Islamic Society of Britain [[spokesman](#) for MCB]
- ❖ M Iqbal Asaria - Afkar Consulting [[chairman](#) of the Muslim Council of Britain's business and economic affairs committee]
- ❖ Sir Iqbal Sacranie - no affiliation stated [former [chairman](#) of MCB]

- ❖ Soumaya Ghannoushi - Academic and freelance writer [co-opted [member](#) of MCB's Central Working Committee]
- ❖ Unaiza Malik - no affiliation stated ([treasurer](#) of Muslim Council of Britain)
- ❖ Tanzeem Wasiti - Muslim Solidarity Committee [has [spoken](#) on behalf of the MCB in an unspecified position]

Signatories linked to the Muslim Association of Britain

- ❖ Abdul Shaheed - North London Central Mosque [this mosque - also known as Finsbury Park mosque has been run by MAB]
- ❖ Anas Altikriti - The Cordoba Foundation [former [president](#) of the Muslim Association of Britain]
- ❖ Belgacem Kahlalech - Algerian League in Britain President [former member of Muslim Association of Britain]
- ❖ Dr Azzam Tamimi - Institute of Islamic Political Thought [Muslim Association of Britain [spokesman](#)]
- ❖ Dr Hafez al Karmi - Mayfair Mosque [[part](#) of MAB group which took over management of Finsbury Park Mosque]
- ❖ Dr Ismail Jalisi - Muslim Association of Britain London
- ❖ Dr Kamal Helbawi - Centre for the Study of Terrorism [founding [chairman](#) of the Muslim Association of Britain]
- ❖ Fareed Sabri - Iraqi Communities in London [has [spoken](#) on behalf of MAB in an unspecified capacity]
- ❖ Ismail Patel - Friends of Al Aqsa [[Spokesman](#) for British Muslim Initiative - a group run by Anas Altikriti, a former MAB president and spokesman]
- ❖ Mohammad Kozbar - Lebanese League London [[secretary](#) of trustees Finsbury park mosque. Board of trustees was set up by MAB]
- ❖ Mohammad Sawlaha - British Muslim Initiative ['Sawlaha' would appear to be a spelling mistake for 'Sawalha'. Mohammad Sawalha is a former [president](#) of MAB]
- ❖ Mustafa al Mansur - MOSAIC Foundation [[imam](#) at Finsbury Park mosque - which is under control of MAB]
- ❖ Professor Tariq Ramadan - Oxford University / Lokahi Foundation [one of the most prominent apologist for the Muslim Brotherhood. MAB is the Muslim Brotherhood's British wing]
- ❖ Salma Yaqoob - Vice Chair Respect [Respect Party candidate whose campaign was [backed](#) by the MAB]
- ❖ Yasmin Qureshi - Prospective Parliamentary Candidate [her campaign to be elected for labour for Brent East was [backed](#) by MAB]

Several signatories have also worked with both the MCB and MAB. For example, Kemal Helbawy co-founded [both](#) the MCB and the MAB. Abdallah Faliq, as well as [representing](#) the East London Mosque Trust has also [worked](#) for the MAB-linked Cordoba Foundation run by Anas Altikriti, the former MAB president.

Several others on the list have worked for projects part-organised by the MCB and MAB. For example, Fida Alaeddin works for Islamexpo which has been endorsed by MAB and the MCB. Soumaya Ghannoushi, another signatory, has also [worked](#) for Islamexpo where she is director of research and Salim Bhorat has also apparently been employed by the organisation, [writing](#) a review of the event for the Islamexpo website. IslamExpo 2006 was officially [opened](#) by Ken Livingstone in his capacity as Mayor of London. Islamexpo has received funding from the Mayor of London's office.

Signatories employed by the Mayor of London

Other individuals work for organisations funded by the Mayor of London's office or have been directly employed by the Mayor. For example, Ruhul Trafader signed the letter as a representative of the 1990 Trust which is [part-funded](#) by the Mayor's office. Yasmin Qureshi has been [employed](#) by the Mayor as his human rights advisor.

Signatories with no connection to London

Furthermore, several of the signatories seem to have little or no connection to London. Salma Yaqoob [lives](#) in Birmingham where she stood as a Respect Party [candidate](#) in 2005. Zahir Birawi is the [chairman](#) of the Leeds Grand mosque. Salim Bhorat from Just Peace [apparently lives in Bolton](#). Ruqqaya Collector and Ali al-Hadithi are both apparently [based in](#) Leeds. Tariq Ramadan does not even have British citizenship and holds a Swiss passport. He is based in [Oxford](#) where he is a research fellow at St Anthony's College.

Summary

The writers of the letter appear to have deliberately concealed the primary affiliations of many of the signatories with the aim of attempting to show that Ken Livingstone's re-election campaign is supported by a wide range of Muslims groups who, in the words of the BBC, "represent the overwhelming majority of Muslims in London". In fact this is not the case, these groups represent just a fraction of Muslims in London and exclude many groups - such as Shias and Ahmadis - which radical Sunni movements habitually disagree with.

The close relationship between Ken Livingstone and reactionary groups like the MCB and the MAB benefits both parties. In return for encouraging Muslims to vote for Ken Livingstone, these two groups gain influence within and support from the Mayor's office in order to better entrench their position as self-appointed representatives of the Muslim community.

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The Centre for Social Cohesion is an independent think tank

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