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London Mayor's Office Works With Man Wanted by Interpol
CSC Reveals Inconsistencies in Conservative Party Policies on Islamist Extremism
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In yesterday's [Sunday Express](#), the Centre for Social Cohesion (CSC) revealed that the Conservative London Mayor's office has worked alongside Mohamed Ali Harrath, who is the subject of an [Interpol Red Notice](#) for "terrorism", "counterfeiting" and "crimes involving the use of weapons/explosives." This is despite previous statements from the party condemning Mr. Harrath.

Mr. Harrath is the founder of revolutionary Islamist group, the Tunisian Islamic Front (TIF), which seeks to create an Islamic state in Tunisia. When asked about his involvement with TIF, he [told](#) the *Times* that

We are not extremists and we are not terrorists and we [sic] never been involved in any such activities...revolution is not [necessarily] a dirty word...there is nothing wrong or criminal in trying to establish an Islamic state.

Islam Channel, Mohamed Ali Harrath and the Mayor's Eid in the Square

On Saturday, 26 September 2009 the Mayor of London held an event called Eid in the Square. Addressing the event was Mohamed Ali Harrath who is also the CEO of the Islam Channel - media sponsors of Eid in the Square. For a video of his appearance [click here](#) (appears 2.19 minutes into video).

The decision to partner with Islam Channel was approved by the Mayor's office. Official Greater London Authority (GLA) [documents](#) suggest that a maximum of £80,000 was allocated by the Mayor's office and the GLA for the event. Up to £30,000 of this came from the GLA, while up to £50,000 was expected from sponsors.

Mayor's Office Statement on Mohamed Ali Harrath

On Wednesday, 30 September, the CSC contacted the Mayor's office in order to clarify their position on engagement with Mr. Harrath. Also included in the email was information relating to Mr. Harrath's Interpol Red Notice.

The CSC received the following response from the Mayor's office:

The Islam Channel Chief Executive Mohamed Ali Harrath is not regarded as a threat by the British Government. He accompanied Robert Lambert, the former Head of the Met Police Muslim Contact to a meeting last year with the Statutory Deputy Mayor. The Mayor's office is proud to support Eid in the Square and this year's celebrations were enjoyed by thousands of Londoners. The Islam Channel played a major factor in this success by broadcasting to millions of viewers in 132 countries.

Inconsistency in Conservative Party Statements on Mohamed Ali Harrath

Pauline Neville-Jones

The view set out by the Mayor's office above is entirely inconsistent with previous Conservative Party statements on Mr. Harrath. In December 2008 the *Times* [reported](#) that Shadow Security Minister, Pauline Neville-Jones, called for Mr. Harrath to be removed from his position as an advisor to the Metropolitan Police:

Unless and until the Interpol red notice is removed it seems quite wrong that Mohamed Ali Harrath should be employed as an adviser...The Government must answer some very serious questions about its border control and vetting systems. Both the Home Office and Metropolitan Police have access to Interpol's information. Did the Home Office access this information before allowing Mohamed Ali Harrath to enter, and did the Metropolitan Police check it before allowing him to work for them? If not, why not?

If they did access Interpol's data, how could the Home Office let in and the Met employ an individual with a red notice for alleged links to a suspected terrorist organisation? The FCO must be aware that the Tunisian Government, an ally in the fight against terrorism, has asked for the extradition of this man.

Chris Grayling

At the recent Conservative Party Conference, Shadow Home Secretary Chris Grayling gave a [speech](#) in which he claimed that a Conservative government will provide a robust defence against Islamic extremism. He pledged to ban Islamist political party Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT) and act against organisations which broadcast the sermons of hate preachers:

I will immediately ban Hizb ut-Tahrir, and any other group that actively incites hatred and violence.

We also have extremists using video links to hold meetings with banned preachers of hate from overseas who urge violence against our society.

If I am Home Secretary the people who organise those meetings will be arrested and prosecuted.

The Conservative Party has consistently employed strong rhetoric against HT. The Conservative Mayor's office however is happy to partner with Islam Channel, which [employs and features](#) prominent members of HT.

Earlier this year, the Mayor's office [recently backed](#) the East London Mosque (ELM), who on New Year's Day 2009 [broadcast](#) on their premises a video sermon of pro al-Qaeda hate preacher Anwar al Awlaki.

Robert Lambert - The Right Partner?

In the above response to the CSC from the Mayor's office, they refer to Robert Lambert's involvement in initiating their relationship with Mr. Harrath. Robert Lambert is, according to the most recently available documents, an employee of iEngage, an online organisation which includes Mr. Harrath as one of its trustees.

In a recent article on the *Guardian's* [Comment is Free blog](#), Mr. Lambert recommended Anas Altikriti as a suitable partner in the government's Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) agenda. Mr. Altikriti is the CEO of the Cordoba Foundation: an organisation that Mr. Lambert is closely linked to. In a [speech](#) last year Conservative leader David Cameron identified Cordoba as an unsuitable organisation with extremist links:

The government has allocated hundreds of thousands of pounds to local authorities to improve community cohesion. But there are worrying signs that ministers have taken their eyes off the ball. Tower Hamlets council has received extensive funding for such projects. But it has now been revealed that one of the organisations it has given thousands of pounds to is a front for the Muslim Brotherhood called the Cordoba Foundation. And what was the first thing this organisation did with the money? It organised a public debate with the title Has Political Participation Failed British Muslims? And who did they invite to speak? The leader of Hizb-ut-Tahrir. Even the most basic research would reveal that the Cordoba Foundation has close connections to people with extremist views, including Azzam Tamimi, the UK representative of Hamas.

As a result of their giving a platform to HT, Cordoba became the first organisation ordered to [return a portion](#) of the PVE funding they received from the government.

Additionally, Cordoba recently sponsored an [event](#) in the Kensington and Chelsea Town Hall that was to feature a video address from Anwar al-Awlaki - author of '[44 Ways to Support Jihad](#)' and [spiritual advisor](#) to three of the 9/11 hijackers - which was only pulled at the last minute after immense pressure from the local council.

CSC Research Fellow, Alexander Meleagrou-Hitchens says:

The apparent inconsistency in Conservative Party statements on Mr. Harrath seems to signify a worrying split between the Mayor's office and Conservative Party Headquarters. Although Mr. Grayling's words at the conference were certainly encouraging, they now need to be backed up with strong actions.

The fact that the Mayor's office is happy to work alongside a man like Mr. Harrath may come as a huge disappointment to those who voted for Boris Johnson in the hope that it would signal a shift away from Ken Livingstone's policy of engaging with radicals.

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The Centre for Social Cohesion is an independent think tank

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