

Creating a Climate of Fear: Counter-Terrorism and Punishment Without Trial

Friday 14 March 2008 ♦ 6.30pm-9.00pm

London Muslim Centre

46 Whitechapel Road

(Tube: Aldgate or Aldgate East)

Organised by

**CAMPAIGN AGAINST CRIMINALISING COMMUNITIES (CAMPACC) with
CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF TERRORISM (CFSOT)**

Co-sponsored by the London Muslim Centre, Islamic Forum of Europe, Cage Prisoners and the Newham Monitoring Project

Yet another Counter-Terrorism Bill is currently before Parliament. It will impose new and worse forms of punishment without trial. Since the first permanent Terrorism Act of 2000, people have suffered much injustice under anti-terrorism measures, particularly Muslims and migrant communities. Out of over 1200 people arrested under anti-terrorism laws, less than 5% have been convicted of 'terrorism' offences, few of these involving any plans for violent activities. Less than 20% were even charged with such offences. A key effect and political aim has been a climate of fear – fear that political activity, or simply talking to the wrong people, will bring arrest or house raids.

Why does the government propose yet another Counter-Terrorism law? What effects will it have? What can people do to oppose it?

Speakers will look at unjust effects of the current anti-terrorism measures and how this injustice would be extended by the new proposals. They will explain and analyse the proposals in the new Bill. There will be plenty of time for questions and discussion – about what powers to oppose, how to present the issues to your own community, and what action to request from your MP.

Chaired by Hugo Charlton, *Barrister, CAMPACC*

SPEAKERS

Gareth Peirce	Human rights lawyer
Saghir Hussein	Cage Prisoners
Azad Ali	Muslim Safety Forum
Ben Hayes	Statewatch
Mahan Abedin	Editor of Islamism Digest
Muhammad Habibur-Rahman	Islamic Forum of Europe
Les Levidow	CAMPACC
Victoria Britain	Journalist
Asad Rehman	Newham Monitoring Project

The chairman of the Centre for the Study of Terrorism, Dr. Kamal El-Helbawi, will join a panel discussion for the second part of the event.

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Centre for the Study of Terrorism - www.cfsot.com ♦ Campaign Against Criminalising Communities - www.campacc.org.uk ♦ London Muslim Centre - www.londonmuslimcentre.org.uk ♦ Islamic Forum of Europe - www.islamicforumeurope.com ♦ Cage Prisoners - www.cageprisoners.com ♦ Newham Monitoring Project - www.nmp.org.uk

REVERSE:

THE COUNTER-TERRORISM BILL 2008: UNJUST PROPOSALS

The government's new proposals are based on the Terrorism Act 2000, which defined terrorism so broadly as to include simply the threat of violence to property in an attempt to influence a government, anywhere in the world. This broad definition, with offences like belonging to or helping a banned organisation, criminalises many normal political activities in the UK and any resistance to oppressive regimes abroad.

Detention without charge would be extended from 28 days to 42 days

'Terrorism suspects' could be detained without charge for six weeks. Before 2000 it was 4 days. Neither government nor police have given any convincing reason for such a long period. The USA manages with 2 days, Algeria in 12.

Post-charge questioning of 'terror suspects' – presumed guilty?

'Terror suspects' could be subjected to further questioning after a criminal charge, even up to the trial date. Saying nothing could count against them at trial. At present, once charged one can refuse to answer till their trial, without this being interpreted as a sign of guilt or deception.

'Terrorist connection' would justify a heavier sentence

Judges could give people longer sentences for 'ordinary' offences if they had a 'terrorism connection'. For example, public order offences like organising an unauthorised demonstration, if a speaker allegedly supports a banned 'terrorist' organisation.

Confiscation of property without trial

Convicted 'terrorists' could have their property confiscated – such as bank accounts, vehicles, computers or even a house. The special procedure for doing this would not be a normal trial. It could involve secret evidence which the affected person would not be allowed to know. Any connections between the property and terrorism would only need to be shown 'on the balance of probability'. Charities' funds could be confiscated in the same way.

Extra punishment without trial beyond the original sentence

Convicted 'terrorists' could face a ban on foreign travel once released from jail. This would be done by a special order, not a trial. Those convicted could also face a requirement to tell the police where they go whenever they sleep away from home, in some cases for life.

New offence for volunteers of not giving information to police

It is already an offence under the 2001 terrorism law not to tell police of suspected terrorist activities if you find anything suspicious in the course of your employment. The 2008 Bill extends this to volunteer workers, for example in a youth project or charity. People might be over-suspicious and report imagined activities because they are afraid of being criminalised for concealment. They also might be deterred from volunteering in a charity that sends money to Afghanistan or Palestine, for example.

New offence of providing information about the armed forces

The Bill would make it an offence to seek or communicate information about the armed forces which could be useful to terrorism. This could apply simply to peace protestors telling each other, for example, what happens at which gates of a military base.

Hiding evidence about police killings

The Bill would allow for the government to hold some inquests in secret, without juries, if evidence would be heard which they believe should not be made public in the interest of national security, international relations or any other public interest. Sensitive material about how and why a person was killed by the police or army would be hidden away and they would never be held properly to account.

Please ask your MP to oppose these proposals!

*For more information on the Counter-Terrorism Bill 2008, and a model letter to send your MP **visit***

www.campacc.org.uk