

## Claystone submission of evidence to Home Affairs Committee inquiry on Counter Terrorism – March 2014

In July 2013, the Home Affairs Committee launched an inquiry into counter-terrorism. The remit of the Home Affairs Committee is to examine the expenditure, administration and policy of the Home Office and its associated public bodies.



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### Commons Select Committee

## Committee launches counter-terrorism inquiry



The Committee's inquiry focused on the Pursue strand of CONTEST which is designed to stop terrorist attacks.

This followed on from the Committee's work on 'Prevent' in its inquiry into the Roots of Violent Radicalism in 2010.

The inquiry examined how the UK police and security services work with foreign governments and international organisations, such as Interpol and Europol to counter terrorist activity.

Claystone submitted evidence to the committee which was accepted and published. Our evidence can be found on page 189 of the publication, it is also pasted below. The complete publication is available here:

<http://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons-committees/home-affairs/CT%20Written%20Evidence.pdf>

See below for our submission to the committee.

## Written evidence submitted by Claystone Associates

Claystone Associates is a non-profit civil rights advocacy group. Claystone conducts research, provides consultation services and campaign development to foster social cohesion in relation to Muslims in British public life.

Our submission to the inquiry offers both a broader view of how counter terrorism measures are often perceived as well as some specific concerns as to how they are manifesting themselves and thereby impacting civil society.

### Has counter terrorism gone too far?

Even though the expression 'War on Terror' might not be used by politicians as much now as it has been in the past, the legacy of the 'War on Terror' is embedded in legislations, institutions and practices across the globe. In some research by Prof. Jude Howell, Centre of Civil Society and Dr Jeremy Lind, University of Sussex, they consider it possible to conceive the 'War on Terror' as a regime, characterised by a complex weaving of discourses, political alliances, policy and legislative shifts, institutional arrangements and practices.<sup>1</sup>

The key features of this regime are that it has:

1. served as a mobilising discourse that politicians and leaders have used to justify their political, geostrategic and military objectives;
2. used militaristic language and rationalised extraordinary responses such as pre-emptive military intervention;
3. provided a polarised vision of the world that pits barbarism against civilisation, modernity against backwardness, good against evil, freedom against oppression;
4. led to a global political re-ordering with a new set of institutional and policy arrangements.

### The theory of the radicalisation conveyor belt

5. Counter Terrorism prevention is largely built on the assumption that there is a radicalisation process that acts like a conveyor belt. It is claimed that non-violent extremism leads to violent extremism. This link is tenuous and un-evidenced. One could equally make the claim that it is in fact perceived violent injustice which is resulting in violent retributive injustice. Unsurprisingly the latter is not a much considered narrative since for any government to acknowledge this would mean accepting that they are at the very least an actor in the process, thereby leaving room for potential culpability.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.lse.ac.uk/internationalDevelopment/research/NGPA/publications/Counter-terrorism%20and%20civil%20society%20final%20version.pdf>

6. CIA officer Marc Sageman, who also advised the New York Police Department and testified in front of the 9/11 Commission, described the conveyor belt theory as “nonsense” and says there is little empirical evidence for such a ‘conveyor belt’ process. “It is the same nonsense that led governments a hundred years ago to claim that left-wing political protests led to violent anarchy.”<sup>2</sup>
7. There were media reports in December 2013 that the government holds a list of 25<sup>3</sup> extremist speakers that have broken no laws, yet the government intend to serve behaviour orders for extremism to stop them speaking publically. Following this Claystone asked the Home office in a freedom of information request if there is in existence a list of public speakers who are considered to preach extremism or intolerance? We also wished to know the criteria for being placed on the list or indeed being removed from the list. Their official response was troubling as they would neither confirm nor deny its existence.<sup>4</sup>

### **Claimed issue of radicalisation and by non-violent extremism on university campuses**

8. Both the media and the government have made assertions that radicalisation is occurring at universities. This claim was challenged by the representative body for UK universities, Universities UK, in its 2011 report ‘Freedom of speech on campus: rights and responsibilities’.<sup>5</sup>
9. Universities UK Chief Executive, Nicola Dandridge, suggested that universities had no more of a problem [with respect to violent extremism] than the rest of society and stated that students had to be left to monitor visiting speakers themselves. In addition to this, Ms Dandridge stated that she had obtained advice from the police and MI5: “They are telling us that there is not necessarily a link that they can prove between open debate in universities and violent extremism subsequently.”<sup>6</sup>
10. Ms Dandridge the chief executive of Universities UK said universities had been unfairly singled out for attention, because many terrorists went to university, “but they tend to be young people and 40 per cent of young people go to university.”<sup>7</sup>
11. This is a view shared by the National Union of Students (NUS) whose then President, Aaron Porter, suggested it was “...irresponsible of Theresa May to try to shift the blame for non-violent extremism onto universities or students.” He further added: “Facing up to the challenges that non-violent extremism brings to campus life

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<sup>2</sup> [http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2013/05/27/sageman-interview\\_n\\_3342206.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2013/05/27/sageman-interview_n_3342206.html)

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.thesundaytimes.co.uk/sto/news/uk\\_news/National/article1355803.ece](http://www.thesundaytimes.co.uk/sto/news/uk_news/National/article1355803.ece)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/193507/response/492898/attach/html/3/attachment.pdf.html>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/highereducation/Documents/2011/FreedomOfSpeechOnCampus.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/terrorism-in-the-uk/8542599/Universities-have-no-problem-with-radicalisation-chief-claims.html>

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*

requires careful support and guidance from Government, not wild sensationalism that only serves to unfairly demonise Muslim students.”<sup>8</sup>

12. Claystone conducted an exploratory report investigating incidents wherein universities cancelled Islamic society events that were to host visiting speakers.
13. These cancellations took place without the consent of the Islamic societies. The reasons for these cancellations, as identified by the study, were primarily due to:
  - i. Pressure placed on the universities from external groups
  - ii. Universities claiming that the visiting speakers promoted views that were not consistent with its values<sup>9</sup>
14. Our study found that universities were acting to cancel events without verifying allegations provided by pressure groups against speakers. This had resulted in reversals to decisions of banning speakers later taking place. It also meant Islamic societies encountered unnecessary obstacles to their activities and may have restricted freedom of expression on campus.<sup>10</sup>
15. The main pressure group involved is a group called ‘Student Rights’. Despite their name they are not run by students nor do they have any student membership. Hilary Aked a researcher at the University of Bath has suggested they are a front group for the Henry Jackson Society neoconservative think tank.<sup>11</sup>
16. An article in the Times newspaper states “Regarding the Henry Jackson Society – to whose principles David Willetts, the universities and science minister, is a signatory – he said that Student Rights was “a project of” the think tank and shared an office with it, but it raised funding independently.”<sup>12</sup>
17. Such revelations give cause for concern that issues are being contrived to give credence to pre-conceived problems that facilitate particular narratives.

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/education/2011/jun/06/theresa-may-extremism-university-islamists>

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.claystone.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Claystone\\_AccessDenied.pdf](http://www.claystone.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Claystone_AccessDenied.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> [http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/hilary-aked/student-rights-campaign\\_b\\_4452823.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/hilary-aked/student-rights-campaign_b_4452823.html)

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/news/students-unions-hit-back-at-group-monitoring-campus-extremism/2010074.article>

## The Charities Commission

18. As part of counter terrorism measures it has been asserted that the charities commission plays a vital role in cutting off potential funding to terrorist organisations. Resulting from this presumed relationship between charity abuse and terrorists is the belief that the response of the charities commission will serve as a critical component to tackling the financing of terrorist related activities.
19. It is our belief that funding for terrorism through the abuse of charity status is an overstated concern. This has been acknowledged by David Walker who in 2009 was head of outreach, compliance and development in the compliance division of the charities commission. On 6<sup>th</sup> March 2009 in a lecture said 'Our assessment as a regulator is that terrorist abuse is actually very rare in charities'<sup>13</sup>
20. In a study by Prof. Jude Howell, Centre of Civil Society and Dr Jeremy Lind, University of Sussex, an interviewee from the charities commission said: "Our approach is more light touch regulation that will be effective, which does not overburden the sector. It is a risk based approach and our approach is miles away from the sledgehammer approach in the US, where if there is doubt, you just take out the charity"<sup>14</sup>
21. We believe that evidence already submitted to the committee asserting that The U.S. Treasury has designated Interpal as a terrorist organisation in 2003 needs to be seen in light of the above.
22. There is concern that the remit of the charities commission seems to have widened from concern about charities funding terrorism to charities giving a platform to those deemed proselytizing an extremist ideology that leads to radicalisation then possibly to terrorism.
23. Governments have consistently failed to substantiate claims that charities are misused by terrorist networks. Under the Bush administration, Dick Cheney said: "If there is a *"if there is a 1% chance that Pakistani scientists are helping Al-Qaeda build or develop a nuclear weapon, we have to treat it as a certainty in terms of our response, it is not about our analysis, it is about our response"*.<sup>15</sup>
24. We feel it is important for the government to step back and look at how the tentacles of counter terrorism policy seem to be spreading deeper and wider than ever conceived at its inception. It is our belief that the adoption of the 1% doctrine is 100% dangerous for us to maintain a free society.

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<sup>13</sup> <http://www.lse.ac.uk/internationalDevelopment/research/NGPA/publications/Counter-terrorism%20and%20civil%20society%20final%20version.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*