

Sunday Times/Andrew Gilligan – Fake News!

Once again, The Sunday Times seems to be engaged in what can best be described as a witch hunt against the Islam Channel and its founder Mohamed Ali Harrath. This weekend it published a story constructed by former Daily Telegraph columnist – Andrew Gilligan who is renowned within the Muslim community for his attacks on senior Muslim figures and organisations, whose Telegraph column was pulled after a string of law suits connected to his inaccurate reporting of issues relating to Muslim figures in Britain.

His article entitled ‘Saudis fund hardline British TV station – the Islam Channel’, is once again full of inaccuracies as it attempts to smear the channel as promoting a ‘hardline’ version of Islam – promoting political bias, advocating violence against women and supporting marital rape’. Worse still it goes further in an attempt to link the channel and its owner to the Saudi Royal family and the recent shocking killing of respected journalist – Jamal Khashoggi.

It is important to note that as a media organisation we feel particularly strongly about the need to protect the wellbeing and freedom of speech of journalists wherever they practice their craft and as such we strongly condemn the killing of Jamal Khashoggi and call for the perpetrators to be brought to justice. We should also like to confirm that neither the Islam Channel or its founder and CEO - Mohamed Ali Harrath, have any connections to the Saudi Royal Family; the Saudi State or any Saudi state organisations. The Islam Channel can confirm that it has on no occasion received funding from any Saudi government or non government organisation.

The article is anchored on the false premise that Islam Channel is currently being ‘investigated’ by Ofcom. Ofcom is obliged to respond to concerns raised by viewers - whether such concerns are raised for malicious reasons or whether they are genuine in nature, as part of its mandated regular random monitoring of the channels output. Ofcom is quite properly ‘assessing one of the programmes broadcast on the channel – a documentary series entitled ‘The Rightly Guided Khalifas’ (which details the important story of the Caliphs who truly followed in the Prophet's foot steps) to establish whether or not an investigation is warranted. There has been no conclusive determination or proclamation from the Ofcom Standards Team on this issue.

In Confidence

“We are writing to inform you that we are currently assessing an episode of “The Rightly Guided Khalifas” on 11 November 2018 at 23:00. We have identified content which we consider may raises issues under the Broadcasting Code and are writing to inform you of this. We will contact you again in due course regarding our assessment of this programme.”

Gilligan, then adopts a much practiced technique – which may have been lifted from the neocon handbook ‘Dirty Tricks and Trump Cards’ written by none other than Roy Godson (the brother of Dean Godson – Director of Policy Exchange) and which states “Contrary to popular misconceptions and public branding as “dirty tricks,” covert action and counterintelligence can have considerable value.” He lists just a handful of the many hundreds of guests and/or presenters which feature on the channel’s daily schedules and publishes statements mostly taken out of context in order to discredit them and by association, the Islam Channel. It should be further noted that the issues, topics and speakers included in the body of the article by Gilligan were and are not the subject of any Ofcom assessment, investigation or issue of concern. Instead they seek to present the reader with the false impression that these figures are the subject of an Ofcom investigation. The article cites so called counter-extremism agencies – the Henry Jackson Society and the Quilliam Foundation, now notorious for their constant attempts to silence legitimate discussion and debate within the Muslim community in Britain.

The so called report by the Sunday Times should therefore be regarded as Fake news and merely yet another excuse to malign what by the article’s own definition is the premier Muslim TV Channel in the UK. Islam Channel Television is now in its 15th year of existence and broadcasts a wide range of religious, lifestyle and current affairs programmes to a significant audience of mostly Muslims, but not exclusively throughout the UK, Europe, Asia and Africa. It is committed to ensuring that its programming is balanced and that it reflects an accurate and informed portrayal of Islamic thinking, Muslim Lifestyle programming and news and current affairs reporting.



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