

----- Original Message -----

**Subject:**Justice Week at Queen Mary University

**Date:**Tue, 6 Nov 2012 12:02:56 +0000

**From:**Rupert Sutton <rupert.sutton@studentrights.org.uk>

**To:**[Shared] Corp Affairs Press <press@qmul.ac.uk>

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to you today from Student Rights, an organisation dedicated to challenging extremism on UK university campuses, as next week the Islamic Society at Queen Mary University will be hosting '[Justice Week](#)', an event which will promote support for Aafia Siddique, [described](#) as an Al-Qaeda facilitator by the FBI, defend Guantanamo detainee Shaker Aamer, and raise money for a charity which supports the families of prisoners detained under terrorism legislation.

The main attractions of the week will be two evening lectures focusing on the situations of a number of prisoners arrested on suspicion of terrorism offences, [where](#) students will be able to "*find out about one of the greatest injustices in our recent history*". However, this will not be a balanced, academic discussion of the facts, but a one-sided and misleading event designed to reinforce grievances that recruiters for violent extremism are all too happy to prey on.

On Monday 12th November, the first [event](#) will feature Asim Qureshi, the executive director of [CagePrisoners](#), who will discuss extradition and rendition in an event that focuses on the cases of Babar Ahmed and Talha Ahsan, extradited to the US last month. Qureshi has a history of supporting violent activity, [stating](#) at a Hizb ut-Tahrir rally in 2006 that "*when we see the examples of our brothers and sisters, fighting in Chechnya, Iraq, Palestine, Kashmir, Afghanistan, then we know where the example lies... We know that it is incumbent upon all of us to support the jihad of our brothers and sisters in these countries when they are facing the oppression of the West*".

The second lecture of the week, 'Save Shaker Aamer: Final British Prisoner in Guantanamo Bay', will feature Joy Hurcombe, the chair of the '[Save Shaker Aamer Campaign](#)', who will speak on Thursday 15th November. Aamer is portrayed solely as a victim by the campaign, which [asks](#) "*why is Shaker Aamer not back home with his family in London?*", yet fails to mention that Aamer has been [described](#) as an "*extremely active*" recruiter for Al-Qaeda by Abu Zubaydah, himself a senior Al-Qaeda figure.

Aamer has also openly [admitted](#) travelling to fight in Afghanistan in 1999, as well as being the roommate of Zacarias Moussaoui, convicted of involvement in the 9/11 attacks. He also claims to have regularly met with Ibn al Shaykh al-Libi, the [commander](#) at Khalden, an Al-Qaeda training camp in Afghanistan. Even Moazzam Begg, a former Guantanamo detainee and director of CagePrisoners, has provided damning evidence of Aamer's involvement in terrorism, [describing](#) him as an Al-Qaeda recruiter and Mujahideen fighter who saw action in Bosnia alongside senior Al-Qaeda commander AbuZubayr al-Haili.

Added to this support for an individual with extremely dubious links to Islamist terrorism is the fact that the publicity for the event states that the ISOC will be “*raising funds for a Muslim charity*” during the week. The charity in question, ‘[Helping Households under Great Stress](#)’ (HHUGS) focuses on providing support for those arrested under terrorism laws. Whilst HHUGS claims that it does not support convicted terrorists, as recently as 2011 it was [urging](#) supporters to write to detainees including [Khalid Al-Fawwaz](#), Osama Bin Laden’s former UK spokesman. Al-Fawwaz, who claimed to have met with Bin Laden in Sudan in the 1990s, was [arrested](#) in 1998 and is thought to have been involved in the bombings of the US Embassies in East Africa on 7th August 1998 which killed 226 people.

As well as raising money for HHUGS, the Islamic Society also state that they will be giving away free literature all week to students across the campus. These include information on Shaker Aamer, as well as on Dr Aafia Siddique, who was convicted in February 2010 of the [attempted murder](#) of US government officials. Dubbed ‘Lady Al-Qaeda’ by the US media, Siddique was arrested in possession of notes referring to mass-casualty attacks and had been involved in Islamism-inspired extremism for a number of years, including [fundraising](#) for a precursor organisation to Al-Qaeda called Maktab Al-Khitmet.

She had also been married to Ammar al-Baluchi, a senior member of Al-Qaeda now imprisoned in Guantanamo Bay who is the nephew of 9/11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed. During their marriage Siddique was [believed](#) to have been involved in a plot to smuggle explosives into the US.

During her trial in the US, Dr Siddique also made anti-Semitic sentiment during her trial, [writing](#) that Jews are “*cruel, ungrateful, back-stabbing people*” and [that](#) “*they masterminded 9/11, and I have proof of that...there are attacks being planned against America, big wars being planned, and they are involved in it*”. She also [asked](#) that jurors should be excluded “*If they have a Zionist or Israeli background*” and that they should be “*subject to genetic-testing, and they should be excluded if you want to be fair*”. The ‘Justice for Aafia Coalition’ (JFAC) logo also appears on promotional material for the week.

That Queen Mary University is providing a platform for individuals like Qureshi and Hurcombe to further mislead students that individuals like Aamer and Siddique have been imprisoned for no reason is deeply concerning. Compounding this is the fact that it will also be allowing its campus to be used to fundraise for a charity which encourages support for individuals like Khalid Al-Fawwaz.

Given that the promotional material for ‘Justice Week’ includes the logo of the Queen Mary University Student Union alongside that of CagePrisoners, HHUGS and JFAC, this risks associating the Student Union with a number of entities that could potentially bring it into disrepute. As Student Unions are now governed by charity law, Queen Mary Student Union has a legal responsibility to avoid such an association.

Here at Student Rights we would urge the university to reconsider their decision to allow this week to go ahead. Whilst discussing and criticising the legal issues associated with War on Terror should not be a topic which students cannot discuss, this event does not seek to do that. Instead, it seeks to inflame anger by fuelling grievances against the West and its response to those who would attack it. This has nothing to do with justice and will only serve to provoke hatred and division on our campuses.

I have written an article on this event and would be keen to include a statement from the university outlining their position on the matter. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any further questions.

Kind Regards,

Rupert Sutton

Student Rights