

## Stephen Lloyd

### Chairman's Introduction

We're here to mark the launch of Tolerance International-UK and in particular its Tolerance Day campaign, and the first part of that is this conference "The Silent Voices of Islam".

I'd like first of all to give you a few brief words about Tolerance International- UK. This is a new charity, the driving force behind of which has been Hamid Bayazi, set up to provide support to victims of intolerance and extremism.

Tolerance seeks to contest extreme behaviour prompted by distorted religious teachings, cultural divisions and political ideologies; recognising at all times that extremism is an attitude which can affect all religions, all cultures and the political life of all societies.

Tolerance International aims to support communities which are vulnerable to such pressures both at home and abroad.

In order to address this broad vision, Tolerance has adopted two particular activities. The first is this conference today which aims to provide a platform for a message about genuine and tolerance in Islam and in other religions.

Secondly, you'll find in your pack details of an online petition. Please go to it, because this petition calls upon the government to recognise the 7<sup>th</sup> of July as the National day of Tolerance, so that on this day every year, Britons of all religions, creeds and cultures may celebrate their common values and bonds and so prevent small minorities who seek to divide us from taking ownership of this day and other days to promote hate and extremism.

In a broader context, Tolerance is undertaking at the moment, four key activities.

First of all, an educational project, successfully piloted at the Bishop Challenor School in Tower Hamlets which has been recommended by the London Borough of Tower Hamlets to other schools in the borough. This aims to encourage young people about issues to do with intolerance in a variety of forms - cultural, religious and racial and to provide them with real life examples where they need to address that situation and work with it.

Secondly a programme designed to enable islamic communities to engage with young muslims in Morocco and empower them to contest and disassociate themselves from extremist religious teachings.

Thirdly, research - a research project is being run by Tolerance with the aim of identifying and quantifying levels of polarisation in Islamic communities in Britain and providing recommendations to address that.

And finally, working with a major American charity, the IPC - the Iran Policy Committee, which is itself a charity under American law- working in Iraq to search out solutions to deal with the devastating effects of polarisation within muslim communities in Iraq and you can all, I am sure, recognise what valuable potential work that is...

I thought I would quote you a few lines from a poem by William Butler Yeats which he wrote just at the end of the First World War, which has I think, particular relevance to what we are discussing today

“Turning and turning in the widening gyre  
The falcon cannot hear the falconer  
Things fall apart  
The centre cannot hold  
Mere anarchy is loosed out on to the world.  
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed  
And everywhere the ceremony of innocence is drowned  
The best of us lack all conviction,  
while the worst are full of passionate intensity”.

And actually I'd like to suggest that much of the theme today is actually give the best a confidence in tolerance to give the best a passionate intensity. And on that note, I'd like to introduce Lord Dick Taverne, QC so he can talk about Tolerance and Fundamentalism.

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London  
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