

HATE ON THE STATE

How British libraries encourage Islamic extremism

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& Douglas Murray



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**James Brandon &
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Introduction

British libraries are funded by the UK taxpayer to educate and entertain the British public. Their range of books reflects the breadth of interests of the nation. However a number of public libraries in the UK stock substantial quantities of literature preaching violent jihad in the most heavily Muslim areas of the country.

Although this problem exists in numerous public libraries, in Waltham Forest, Birmingham and Blackburn, the following report mainly focuses on one such library service – that of Tower Hamlets in east London which has the largest Muslim population of any London borough. Tower Hamlets’ eight lending libraries contain several hundred books and audiotapes by radical Islamists, stocking the works and words of the leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood and Jamaat-e-Islami, many senior Wahhabi clerics and even preachers who have been convicted in the UK of incitement to murder.

Many of these books stocked in the Islam section of libraries:

- **Glorify acts of terrorism against followers of other religions**
- **Incite violence against anyone who rejects jihadist ideologies**
- **Endorse violence and discrimination against women**

In a number of cases these books are not only on library shelves but are also given special prominence in displays. Such books abuse traditions of rationalism and tolerance and risk damaging community cohesion. In the worst cases they are the tools of radicalisation and increase the risk of Islamic terrorism.

Two examples are particularly striking:

Abu Hamza al-Masri is currently in prison, serving a seven year sentence for incitement. His sermons in Finsbury Park Mosque influenced, among others, Zacarias Moussaoui, the convicted ‘twentieth hijacker’ of 9/11, and Richard Reid, the ‘shoe-bomber’. In Tower Hamlets libraries several copies of Abu Hamza’s writings on jihad are freely available and are uncritically presented on open shelves.

Abdullah al-Faisal was jailed for soliciting murder in 2003, having repeatedly called for the murder of all non-Muslims. After serving his sentence he was deported in 2007. One of the 7/7 London bombers, Germaine Lindsay, attended his sermons. Yet in Tower Hamlets libraries several copies of al-Faisal’s books can be read by any member of the public.

The work of such convicted criminals are the tip of the iceberg. The libraries of Tower Hamlets also play host to disproportionate quantities of radical literature by people

who could best be described as ‘terrorism enablers’ – people who provide the spiritual and theological justifications for acts of violent jihad. For example, the Tower Hamlets library catalogue contains no fewer than 39 works by Ibn Taymiyya, many of which are held in multiple copies. Ibn Taymiyya was a medieval scholar who is regarded by bin Laden and others as the leading advocate of Islamic ‘total war’. The work of modern pro-jihadist writers – and of conservative Saudi clerics in particular – is also stocked in large numbers. For example, Watney Market library in Tower Hamlets contains a book called *Jihad in the Quran and Sunna* by Abdullah bin Muhammad bin Humaid, the former chief justice of Saudi Arabia. In the book, bin Hamaid writes that “Jihad is a great deed indeed and there is no deed whose reward or blessing is as that of it, and for this reason, it is the best thing that one can volunteer for.”

The works of Wahhabi clerics, the Muslim Brotherhood and the Jamaat-e-Islami who have habitually urged violence against both non-Islamic governments and non-Muslims in general are also prominently stocked in the libraries. For example, Tower Hamlets libraries stock several dozen books that either are written by Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhab (the founder of Wahhabism) or are uncritical explanations of his doctrines. In addition the borough’s libraries stock hundreds of volumes of work by writers such as Hassan al-Banna, Sayyid Qutb and Abu Ala al-Maududi – all of whom called for violent jihads to be waged against any people who did not follow their interpretation of Islam.

But even among writers whose books do not advocate violence, the libraries’ collections remain heavily skewed in favour of Wahhabi and Salafi texts at the expense of more moderate authors. For example, while Tower Hamlets libraries stock around 80 copies of books and audiotapes by Bilal Philips, a Salafi preacher popular with UK extremists, they stock only two different books by Dr Jamal Badawi, a Canadian author well-known for preaching against violence, intolerance and Islamic separatism – even though Badawi has published more than 14 separate works on the subject. In addition the libraries of Tower Hamlets stock numerous books by Hizb ut-Tahrir, a group which although not actively violent, has been banned by many countries, including Germany.

Finally, there is a serious deficit of critical works on Islamist authors and Islamic history. For example, while Tower Hamlets libraries contain dozens of books by Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhab and his followers, there are only five books which are devoted critically studying the Wahhabist legacy – and some of these are filed in the history section rather than in the Islam sections of these libraries. This imbalance can also be seen regarding the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, Hassan al-Banna. While the same libraries contain dozens of al-Banna’s works, for instance 11 copies of his biography of Muhammad alone, only two scholarly books on the

Muslim Brotherhood are stocked – both of which are written from a pro-Brotherhood perspective. Similarly the only critical edition of Sayyid Qutb’s work has apparently been withdrawn from circulation, while the libraries stock 11 copies of Qutb’s book *Milestones* which is widely seen as the handbook of the contemporary jihadist movement. This bias becomes more absurd when the libraries stock a book *Image of the Prophet Muhammad in the West* which attacks three ‘orientalist’ critics of traditional Islamic history for “lacking objectivity” even though the library does not stock any books by writers mentioned.

This imbalance is a problem for a number of reasons:

- **Any member of the public who wanted to learn about Islam and who visited these libraries with no prior knowledge would be led to believe that the most extreme interpretations of the religion, extolling bigotry, separatism and even violence are the most legitimate and commonplace.**
- **A reader who was already Muslim or who was interested in adopting Islam as a religion – if relying on such books – would also be pushed towards the most radical and political interpretations of Islam.**
- **Any Muslim citizen who is already influenced by radical Islam can “top up” on radical literature in state-owned and state-funded institutions.**

In other words, the predominance of such texts risks radicalising Muslims while making non-Muslims more hostile towards the Islamic faith. It is the purpose of this report to bring this misuse of public funds to public notice.

Although jihad (meaning ‘struggle’) can have a multitude of meanings, the authors of this report have largely used jihad to indicate violence carried out in the name of Islam – as this is the context in which most of the authors cited also write.

Islamist books in Tower Hamlets libraries

Introduction

The borough of Tower Hamlets has a larger Muslim population, both in absolute and percentage terms, than any other London district. In keeping with the region's demographics, the borough's eight lending libraries (four of which are called 'Idea Stores') hold a large number of Islamic texts in a number of languages such as Bengali, Urdu and Somali, as well as in English. Within these collections the libraries stock a very large and disproportionate number of texts by radical Islamist authors.

The collections

Muslim Brotherhood books

Hassan al-Banna

Hassan al-Banna was the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood. He was one of the leading exponents of military jihad in the early part of the 20th century and, through the Muslim Brotherhood, his intellectual influence remains immense. Tower Hamlets libraries stock a large variety of al-Banna's works including at least 11 copies of *The Seerah of the Final Prophet*, al-Banna's biography of Muhammad – including a copy in Somali and one in Bengali – and 17 copies of an audiobook of al-Banna's *al-Ma'thurat*.

The libraries also stock one copy, in Watney Market library, of al-Banna's most accessible book on jihad, entitled simply *Jihad in Islam*. The opening chapter of the book reads:

“Jihad is an obligation from Allah on every Muslim and cannot be ignored nor evaded. Allah has ascribed great importance to jihad and has made the reward of the martyrs and the fighters in His way a splendid one. Only those who have acted similarly and who have modelled themselves upon the martyrs in their performance of jihad can join them in this reward.”

Alongside these many reprints of al-Banna's key works, Tower Hamlets libraries contain only two academic works which directly tackle the legacy of al-Banna and the Muslim Brotherhood. *Islam without Fear – Egypt and the New Islamists* by Raymond William Baker and *The Society of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt* by Brynjar Lia, both of which attempt to rehabilitate the Brotherhood by depicting it as a modernising force. The libraries do not stock any copies of Richard Mitchell's *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*, long regarded as the most critical guide to al-Banna's movement. The libraries do however contain four copies of Gilles Kepel's *The Roots of Radical Islam* which deals with Islamic activism in Egypt more generally.

Sayyid Qutb

Tower Hamlets libraries stock a large number of books by Sayyid Qutb (1906 – 1966), an Egyptian regarded by many as the founder of modern Islamic radicalism whose work is seen as required reading by many extremist groups in the UK such as Hizb ut-Tahrir. The libraries stock no less than 11 copies of *Milestones*, Qutb's key work, including several copies in Bengali. In the book, much of which was intended as a critique of 1950s Egypt, Qutb writes that everything which is non-Muslim is “evil and corrupt” and urges both political activism and violent jihad against all non-Muslim forms of government. He also urges Muslims to disobey laws not based on the Sharia,

writing that “it is clear that obedience to laws and judgments is a sort of worship.” He also wrote in the book that Jews were planning to “penetrate into body politics of the whole world” so they “then may be free to perpetuate their evil designs.”

The libraries also stock several volumes of Qutb’s multi-volume exegesis of the Quran, *In the Shade of the Quran*. Qutb began writing the book in 1951 in order to show readers how the Quran should be interpreted to support his militant, quasi-fascist, anti-Jewish ideology. For example, in his commentary on Sura (chapter) 5 of the Quran, Qutb writes that the verses show that “the Muslim world has often faced problems as a result of Jewish conspiracies ever since the early days of Islam.”

Similarly, in his commentary on Sura 2:190 of the Quran, Qutb writes that jihad is not a doctrine of self-defence but rather should be carried out against non-Muslim states regardless of whether or not they were at peace with the Islamic world:

“Since the objective of the message of Islam is a decisive declaration of man’s freedom, not merely on the philosophical plane but also in the actual conditions of life, it must employ Jihad. It is immaterial whether the homeland of Islam – in the true Islamic sense, Dar ul-Islam – is in a condition of peace or whether it is threatened by its neighbors.”

While Tower Hamlets libraries stock numerous copies of Qutb’s books which explain how to interpret the Quran, the only critical edition of Qutb’s work listed in the libraries catalogue, *The Sayyid Qutb Reader* by Albert Bergesen, has no shelf number and appears to have been withdrawn from circulation (although, conversely, since the book was published in June 2007, it is possible that it may not yet have been given a shelf number by the library).

Yusuf al-Qaradawi

Yusuf al-Qaradawi, the present spiritual leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, is moderately well represented by the Tower Hamlet’s libraries. In total nine of his different books are stocked in multiple copies. The most-stocked of his book with five copies is *The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islam* which is a fairly straightforward – and relatively moderate – compilation of Islamic practice. However the two books with the next largest number of copies (four copies each) are both strongly political handbooks describing how to put Qaradawi’s ideas into practice. Both, *Islamic Awakening – Between rejection and extremism* and *The Priorities of the Islamic Movement in the Coming Phase*, lay out Qaradawi’s vision of Islam becoming the world’s dominant religion – ideally through peaceful means but by force if necessary. It is a reflection on the other books stocked by Tower Hamlets’ libraries that Qaradawi – reviled by many Muslim liberals – comes across as one of the more moderate Islamist authors in the libraries’ collections.

Salafi and Wahhabi writers

Writers representing Salafist and Wabbabist schools of thought are well-represented in the libraries of Tower Hamlets. Many of the books are printed by publishers in Saudi Arabia who are closely linked to the Saudi government. Although many of these Wahhabi-influenced books deal with theological issues which may appear abstract and worldly, they can play an important role in encouraging Muslim readers to see themselves as separate, and opposed to, mainstream British society.

Ibn Taymiyya

The libraries stock a very large number of texts by Taqi al-din Ahmad ibn Taymiyya, a medieval cleric who modern jihadists see as a role model on account of his advocacy of total war against the Crusaders and Mongols in the 13th and 14th centuries.

A search of the library catalogue produces at least 39 different works under variations of ibn Taymiyya's name (including five listed under the honorary title 'Sheikh al-Islam' which is accorded to him by many contemporary jihadists). The most common book is his *The friends of Allah and the friends of Shaytan* of which six copies are stocked, followed by four copies of *Enjoining Good, Forbidding Evil* in which ibn Taymiyya tells readers that a true Muslim should act vigorously to enforce Islamic laws. This book has been a guidebook for modern jihadists who believe that they have a blanket dispensation to enforce Islamic regulations on strangers – for example attacking women who they believe are insufficiently modest ('bad hijab') or punishing Muslims who drink or sell alcohol.

Similarly his *Book of Emaan*, of which the libraries hold five copies, ibn Taymiyyah writes that Muslims who appreciate non-Muslim qualities become non-Muslim themselves: "the approval of Kufr is kufr and the disapproval of Islam is kufr". He explains that this means that the person should be killed if they are perceived as having left Islam:

"Anyone who says anything or does something which contradicts his shahaadatayn [profession of belief in Islam] will be nullifying his declaration [of faith] and he will be treated as having abandoned the *Deen* of Allah... He will be treated as a disbeliever in this world and the laws of apostasy will be applied to him. Prominent among these laws is repentance. He will be killed if he has not repented." [p.191]

On Page 207, he adds that "true believers show animosity and hatred towards disbelievers and never support them."

Most of the listed texts relating solely to ibn Taymiyya are straightforward re-printings of his works. The sole – and partial – exception appears to be *Muslims Under Non-Muslim Rule – Ibn Taymiyya on fleeing from sin* by Yahya Michot which attempts to rehabilitate ibn Taymiyya as a mainstream theologian.

Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhab

Tower Hamlets libraries contain more than 20 copies of books by Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhab (1703 – 1792), the ultra-conservative Islamic cleric who laid the foundations for both the modern Saudi state and Wahhabist theology. In addition to these re-printings of his works there are dozens of works by other modern Salafi writers who repeat, almost verbatim, ibn Abdul Wahhab's ideas and doctrines.

The libraries stock 15 clearly marked copies of ibn Abdul Wahhab's key work, the *Ketab at-Tauhid*, in a variety of different editions. The Whitechapel Ideas Store, for example, has three copies of the work in English and two in Bengali. But in addition to these editions under ibn Abdul Wahhab's name, there are several other reprints of his books which do not list his name and are disguised as generic guides to Islam. For example, *The Concise Collection on Creed and Tauhid* which is published by Darussalam publishers in Saudi Arabia and is stocked at seven of Tower Hamlets' eight libraries is in fact a straightforward reprint of the *Kitab at-Tawheed* – but despite this it does not show ibn Abdul Wahhab's name on either the front cover or the inside title page. In addition to books which are explicitly by or about ibn Abdul Wahhab, there are many other books such as *Towards understanding Taudeed – Reflections on Islamic monotheism* by Shaikh Muhammad Ahmad Basheel (Ar-Raqeem Publications, 1995) which are little more than summaries of ibn Abdul Wahhab's thoughts on ways to 'restore' Islam to its original state. This book, for example, describes him as "the great scholar Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhab who strove to purge Islam of innovations and bring Muslims back to pure faith." [p.20]

Further to these many re-printings (overt and covert) and re-phrasings of ibn Abdul Wahhab's own work there are several other books which purport to be impartial guides to his life and thought. However these books are far from being critical or neutral editions. For example, *An Explanation of Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhab's four principles of shirk* by Abu Ammar Yasir Qadhi a Saudi-educated Pakistani from Texas, is again little more than a summary of Abdul Wahhab's teachings on 'idolatry' but is stocked in both the Bow Ideas Store and the Watney Market Library. A similar work, *Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhab* by Jalal Abualrub, published in Saudi Arabia, is a flattering biography that presents ibn Abdul Wahhab as a courageous moral reformist.

In comparison to these dozens of hagiographies, summaries and re-printings, there

are only five books in the libraries which are dedicated to explaining Wahhabism from an academic perspective – four copies of *God's Terrorists* by Charles Allen and a single copy of *Wahhabi Islam* by Natana J. Delong-Bas.

Saudi-based clerics

In addition to stocking many works written directly by ibn Abdul Wahhab or about his teachings, Tower Hamlets libraries stock a large number of works by the most prominent Wahhabist scholars of the past generation. Many of these works – even when written by Wahhabi writers who are opposed to the Saudi monarchy – contain numerous expressions of hatred towards non-Muslims and towards Muslims who do not follow Wahhabi-style Islam.

Muhammad bin Jamil Zino.

One of the most virulent Wahhabi clerics whose books are stocked in the Tower Hamlet's libraries, is Muhammad bin Jamil Zino, a Syrian-born, Saudi-educated cleric who works for the Saudi government in Mecca.

In his question-and-answer book *What a Muslim Should Believe* published in Saudi Arabia by Darussalam, Zino offers hardline responses to a series of questions hypothetically put to him by Muslims seeking his advice. Tower Hamlets libraries stock 16 copies of this book (including three copies each in Whitechapel Ideas Store, Chrisp Street Ideas Store, Watney Market Library and Bethnal Green Library). Representative of the book's content is Question 43 on page 53:

Question 43: Is it allowed to support and love disbelievers?

Answer: No, it is not allowed

In another book, *Islamic Guidelines for individual and social reform* (a copy of which is in both Bow St Ideas Store and Bethnal Green Library), Zino defines jihad as an obligation which all Muslims should partake in; either directly or by giving money to the mujahedeen, telling his readers to also instruct their children in the principles of Jihad:

“Teach your children the love of justice and revenge from the unjust like the Jews and the tyrants. Consequently our youth would know that Palestine should be freed and Jerusalem must be of the Muslims. They have to learn about Islam and Jihad as per the Qur’an and that the holy fighting for justice is supported by Allah the Almighty.”

On Page 167 of one edition of the book, Zino lists hadiths which Muslims are obliged to “act upon”. The first one in his list reads: “The Last Hour will not appear unless the Muslims fight the Jews and kill them.”

Abdullah bin Muhammad Bin Humaid

The Watney Market Library also stocks several books by Abdullah bin Muhammad Bin Humaid, the former chief justice of Saudi Arabia. In his book *Jihad in the Quran and Sunna*, stocked in Watney Market, Bin Humaid (also spelt Humayd) seeks to persuade Muslim readers that jihad is more important to Islam than pilgrimage and other rituals:

“Jihad is a great deed indeed and there is no deed whose reward or blessing is as that of it, and for this reason, it is the best thing that one can volunteer for. All the Muslim religious scholars unanimously agree that jihad is superior to Hajj and ‘Umra (pilgrimage) and also superior to nonobligatory Salat (prayer) and Saum (fasting) as mentioned in the Qur’an and the Prophet’s Sunna.”

Humaid also tells his readers that Islam is the most warlike of the world’s religions and that Muslims should fight to make Islam dominant over other faiths:

“You will not find any organisation past or present, religious or nonreligious as regards (Jihad and military) (ordering) the whole nation to march forth and mobilise all of them into active military service as a single row for Jihad in Allah’s cause so as to make superior the Word of Allah (i.e. none has the right to be worshipped but Allah), as you will find in the Islamic Religion and its teachings.”

Abdul Aziz bin Baaz

The libraries also stock a range of works by Abdul Aziz bin Baaz who was Saudi Arabia’s chief mufti from 1993 – 1999 and who was famous for declaring that the world was flat. Bin Baaz was seen by many salafi and wahhabi clerics as the leading scholar of his generation. The library catalogues show that a total of 19 copies of his various books are held by Tower Hamlets’ libraries. Several of these are Bengali translations.

Most of bin Baaz’s books which are stocked appear to be relatively apolitical works dealing with day-to-day aspects of the Islamic faith (prayers, fasting, washing etc.). However in his book, *The Authentic Creed and the Invalidators of Islam* (published by Darussalam in 2000), bin Baaz writes on page 45 that “to take the disbelievers for friends, give them support or assistance against the Muslims is an act of disbelief.”

On pages 43 – 47, he also lists ten acts which can take a Muslim “out of the fold of Islam”. These include “not to accuse polytheists and those who commit shirk or disbelief, to be in doubt as their being disbelievers or to approve of their beliefs” [p.44].

Among many Muslims, bin Baaz is remembered for insisting in 1966 that the world

was flat – for which he cited verses from the Quran as evidence. Similar notions can be found on page 45 of *The Authentic Creed*, when bin Baaz says that a Muslim becomes out of “the fold of Islam” if they use “magic, in all its forms, including turning someone away from somebody that he or she loves... whoever practices magic or approves of it is a disbeliever.” [p.45] Tower Hamlets libraries hold 15 copies of the book (two copies in every library except in the Cubitt Town and Dorset libraries).

Similar attitudes are found in another Saudi-produced book in the Whitechapel Ideas Store, *The Ka’ba is the Center of the World* by Saad al-Marsfi, translated Hadeer Abo El-Nagah, which tells Muslim readers that Mecca is literally at the geographical centre of the world. For example the book says on page 127 that:

“Amazingly enough after drawing the map with all the continents on it, Mecca was found to be at the center of it. Mecca is a center of a circle that connects all the continents. Menacingly the land of the Earth is evenly distributed around Mecca. Therefore the city of Mecca is literally the center of the Earth in accordance to Allah’s saying.”

This book was on display on its own stand in the Whitechapel Ideas Centre on 31 July of this year.

Sheikh Saleh al-Fozan

Tower Hamlets libraries also stock eight copies of the *Book of Tawheed* by Sheikh Saleh al-Fozan (also spelt Fauzan or Fawzan), a prominent conservative Saudi cleric based in Riyadh. In July 2007 al-Fozan issued as fatwa saying that Muslim liberals and secularists were apostates who should be killed for abandoning Islam:

“Calling oneself a liberal Muslim is a contradiction in terms... one should repent before God for such ideas in order to be a real Muslim... He who wants freedom with only the controls of man-made law has rebelled against the law of God.”

Tower Hamlets have eight copies of al-Fozan’s *Book of Tawheed* which is based heavily on the ideas of Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhab. Other books by al-Fozan which are stocked by Tower Hamlets libraries include *Declaration of Faith* (four copies) and *Rulings pertaining to Muslim women* (one copy). In *Rulings pertaining to Muslim Women* al-Fozan tells readers that the West is using women to undermine Islam:

“The enemies of Islaam [sic] and the hypocrites seek to make the woman an instrument of destruction; a snare by which they can entrap those who are weak in their eemaan (faith) and those who have bodily desires in order that they satisfy their desperate lusts... For this reason, they have tried hard to remove the woman from her home to join the men in the workplace, side by side, or to serve men in

hospitals, as hostesses on planes, as teachers or students in mixed classrooms, as actresses in theatres, singers, as presenters in various forms of media, spreading fitnah (trials, temptations, corruption) with her voice and appearance.”

Muhammad ibn Saalih al-Uthaymeen

Another senior Wahhabi cleric whose works are stocked in considerable numbers is Muhammad ibn Saalih al-Uthaymeen (1925 – 2001) who was a lecturer at the Grand Mosque of Mecca for over thirty-five years. Along with Abdul Aziz bin Baaz and Muhammad Nasir ud-din al-Albani, al-Uthaymeen was regarded as one of the great Wahhabi scholars of his generation. Tower Hamlets libraries stock a total of 21 copies of his various works.

The libraries also stock seven copies of al-Uthaymeen’s book *Three Fundamental Principles of Fearing Allah* (in different editions) – five of which are in Bengali. Three copies (including one in Bengali) are stocked at the Christ St library alone. In the book, al-Uthaymeen expounds at length the ‘three principles’ of Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhab. An additional five copies of his book *Islamic Fataawa Regarding the Muslim Child* (which also contains relevant rulings by other jurists such as bin Baaz) are also stocked by the borough’s libraries – including two in the Whitechapel Idea Store.

The libraries also stock several books by al-Albani (1914 – 1999) who is regarded by most Salafis as the leading scholar of the age alongside al-Uthaymeen and bin Baaz.

Shaykh Salman al-Awdah

The libraries also stock books by Shaykh Salman al-Awdah who was one of the leading opponents of the Saudi government in the early 1990s. Al-Awdah’s opposition to the Saudi monarchy was praised by Osama bin Laden in the early 1990s while, more recently, his support for jihadist fighters in Iraq has won praise from other Islamic radicals.

In *Thus Taught the Prophets* which is stocked by the Whitechapel and Canary Wharf Idea Stores, al-Awdah tells readers that the war between radical Islamists and their enemies should be seen as part of an apocalyptic battle between the forces of good and evil:

“This great battle between the various forms of polytheism and the one true monotheism, truth and falsehood, the callers to Allah and the callers to evil will continue to be fought in every sphere of life. Undoubtedly the battle between shirk and Tawhid is the greatest of all battles.” [p.55]

He says that in this battle, Muslims are entitled to use any weapon against their enemies:

“The weapons of this war between polytheism and monotheism, between the servants of the devils and the servants of Allah, are that every means can be used.” [p.54]

Bilal Philips

Tower Hamlet’s libraries also stock 80 copies of books by Bilal Philips, a Jamaican convert to Islam who preaches Wahhabi ideas in the UK, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States. The library catalogue includes 17 copies of his book *Fundamentals of tawheed: Islamic monotheism* in Bengali alone – including 5 copies in the Whitechapel Ideas Store. The libraries stock a further 15 copies of the same book in English – including three in the Chrisp St ideas store, three in the Whitechapel Ideas Store and two more in the Watney Market Library. The book is largely a re-statement of ibn Abdul Wahhab’s classic 18th century work on Tawheed or monotheism.

Western media have long hinted that Philips has been associated with Islamic extremists – and in particular with members of the group led by Sheikh Omar Abdul Rehman who attacked the World Trade Centre in 1993. However none of these claims have been substantiated and Philips has never been charged with any terror-related offences. Despite this, the Australian government barred him from entering Australia in April 2007.

Darussalam Publishers

Many of the books by Wahhabi and Salafi writers are produced by the Darussalam publishing house based in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. In addition to publishing books by prominent Wahhabi clerics, the organisation also publishes more general books on Islamic history and other related subjects. Many of these books are stocked by Tower Hamlets libraries and contain material which is potentially as incendiary as that by better known authors. For example, in the book *Commanders of the Muslim Army* by Mahmood Ahmad Ghadanfar (published by Darussalam in January 2001) which is stocked by Watney Market Library, readers are urged on pages 11 – 13 to admire Islamic warriors (including Muhammad himself) and to seek to replicate their deeds:

“Doubtless those great personalities who were trained by the greatest commander of Arab and Ajam, the sultan of al-Madinah, the Prophet (pbuh in Arabic) himself, had been transformed by personal contact with his radiant personality. Their eyes witnessed his greatness, which had become the axis of their hearts souls and very existence. The only meaning and purpose of their lives was to achieve martyrdom in the cause of Islam. A study of the enviable lives and characters of these great generals will inspire modern day *Mujahideen*, soldiers and military leaders with the spirit of sacrifice and *Jihad*.”

On the following page, the author urges Muslims to pray that modern “mujahideen” will be as successful as those of previous generations:

“Pray to Allah Almighty that he grants abundant divine guidance to the military experts, generals, the young soldiers and *Mujahideen* to follow in the footsteps of these great Companions and generals and bring back the past glories of Islam.”

Books relating to Jamaat-e-Islami

Among the libraries' collections there are several hundred of books and audiotapes by Abu Ala Maududi, the founder of Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), the main Islamist group in Pakistan, and Sayeedi Dilwar Hussain, one of the most prominent leaders of the group's Bangladesh branch. Even in the children's section there are books written by key JI figures such as Khurram Murad, a former vice-president of the group who helped established Leicester's Islamic Foundation which itself prints many of the fundamentalist works stocked by Tower Hamlets libraries.

Maulana Abu Ala Maududi

Tower Hamlets libraries stock an extensive collection of the works of Mawlana Maududi, the founder of Jamaat-e-Islami. The online catalogue lists 61 separate works by Maududi, many of which are stocked in multiple editions (although some of those listed are also single volumes of larger multi-volume works).

The most common of Maududi's books stocked by the library is *Maududi's Exegesis of the Quran* which consistently interprets Islam's holy book to argue that hostility between Muslims and non-Muslims is eternal and inevitable. For example, when Maududi explains Verse 109:6, "For you is your religion; for me is mine" – a phrase often used by Muslim moderates to promote religious tolerance, Maududi says the verse should be understood to mean that:

"My religion is entirely distinct and separate from your religion. I am not a worshipper of your gods and you are not worshippers of my God. I cannot worship your gods and you are not prepared to worship my God, Therefore, you and I can never follow and walk one and the same path together."

He then elaborates on this interpretation further to tell his readers that:

"This is not a message of tolerance to the disbelievers, but a declaration of immunity, disgust with and dissociation from them as long as they are disbelievers."

Among the other books stocked is Maududi's *Jihad in Islam* in which he argues that Islam is a revolutionary religion which should be spread – by force if necessary – until all non-Islamic forms of government are destroyed. Five copies of the book are stocked at Bethnal Green Library, Bow St Ideas Store, Chrip St Ideas store (two copies) and Watney Market library. Typical of the book are passages explaining that the aim of Islam is to replace all non-Islamic forms of governance:

"It must be evident to you from this discussion that the objective of Islamic 'Jihad'

is to eliminate the rule of an un-Islamic system and establish in its stead an Islamic system of state rule. Islam does not intend to confine this revolution to a single State or a few countries; the aim of Islam is to bring about a universal revolution.” [p.24]

In *Towards Understanding Islam* (which the libraries hold five copies of), Maududi seeks to challenge those who say that ‘jihad’ can have a primarily peaceful interpretation and tells readers that the highest form of jihad is to fight physically:

“*Jihad* means to struggle to the utmost of one’s capacity. A man who exerts himself physically or mentally or spends his wealth *in the way of Allah* is indeed engaged in *Jihad*. But in the language of the *Shari’ah* this word is used particularly for a war that is waged solely in the name of Allah against those who practice oppression as enemies of Islam. This supreme sacrifice of life devolves on all Muslims. If, however, a section of Muslims offer themselves for the *Jihad*, the community as a whole is absolved of its responsibility. But if none comes forward, everybody is guilty.” [Chapter 5]

Dilwar Hussain Sayeedi

Dilwar Hussain Sayeedi is one of the most prominent leaders of the Bangladeshi branch of Jamaat-e-Islami. Searching for his name, and the many variants of it, in the Tower Hamlets library catalogue produces a list of around 380 of his different works (a large number composed of tapes of his speeches). A further breakdown of these results suggests that the Tower Hamlets’ libraries own at least 900 separate volumes, including cassettes of Sayeedi’s works and lectures. Even if this exceptionally high figure is partly the result of cataloguing errors it is evidence none-the-less that the council’s libraries contain a huge number of Sayeedi’s works – almost all of which are in Bengali.

Sayeedi has compared Hindus to excrement, saying: “Why should we feel sad when the Hindu brothers choose to leave our country? Do we mourn when we have indigestion and materials leave our bodies?”

He has also defended attacks on members of the minority Ahmadi community by his supporters in Bangladesh. In 2004 he called for the banning of a fictional book written by Humayun Azad, a Bangladeshi novelist, which satirized the role of the Jamaat-e-Islami in Bangladesh’s 1971 war of independence. Sayeedi’s calls for the book to be banned were followed by a brutal attack on Azad, a few months after which the author died.

In 2006, members of the UK’s Foreign Office advised against allowing Sayeedi into

Britain. When in London, Sayeedi has been a regular guest and speaker at the East London Mosque which is partly controlled by supporters of Jamaat-e-Islami. On previous occasions, Sayeedi's supporters in the UK have attacked and beaten up Bangladeshi elders who were opposed to his visit.

Jamaat-e-Islami writers and children's books

The libraries also stock several works by other senior members of the Jamaat-e-Islami. For example, the libraries stock several works by Khurshid Ahmad, the co-founder of the Islamic Foundation in Leicester which prints many of the books which are stocked by Tower Hamlets libraries. In *Family Life in Islam*, of which two copies are held by the library, he writes that people who have sex outside marriage should be punished and that elements in society which encourage it should be "eliminated":

"Fornication (zina), as such, has been forbidden and has been made a punishable offence. All roads that lead to this evil are blocked and whatever paves the way towards it is checked and eliminated. This is why promiscuity in any form is forbidden. The Islamic system of hijab is a wide-ranging system which protects the family and closes those avenues which lead towards illicit sex or even indiscriminate contact between the sexes in society." [p.35]

Books written by senior members of the Jamaat-e-Islami are also stocked in the children's sections of the library. For example the libraries hold three copies of a children's book, *The wise poet, story of al-Tufayl Bin 'Amr* by Khurram Murad, a senior leader of the Bangladeshi branch of Jamaat-e-Islami who also helped found the Islamic Foundation in Leicester. Two of the books are stocked in Watney Market library.

Convicted preachers of hate

Tower Hamlets libraries contain several books written by UK-based radicals who have been convicted for inciting violence. It is ironic that although the writers of some of the books have been imprisoned and, in one case, deported for inciting violence and racial hatred, their equally inflammatory books remain freely available on the shelves of libraries in Tower Hamlets.

Abu Hamza al-Masri

Tower Hamlets libraries contain three copies of two books by Abu Hamza al-Masri. Al-Masri is the former imam of the Finsbury Park mosque where many future terrorists such as Richard Reid and Zacarias Moussaoui heard his sermons. In February 2006, Abu Hamza was sentenced to seven years in prison for inciting murder and racial hatred.

Abu Hamza's book *Khawarij and Jihad*, published in Birmingham by Makhtabah al-Ansar publishers, is stocked by Watney Market Library and the Whitechapel Ideas Store. In the book Abu Hamza tells readers that it is permissible to kill Muslims who oppose what he regards as the truth, citing the example of Muhammad to prove his point:

“When people opposed the Islam and the Muslims, although they were saying La ilaha Illallah [‘There is no deity but God’], they were killed in front of the Messenger, and their killing was blessed by the Quran and endorsed by the Prophet.”

The book also contains lengthy discussions of why jihadist groups in Algeria failed to topple the government during the country's civil war.

A second book by Abu Hamza entitled *Ruling by man-made law - Is it minor or major kufr – Explaining the words of ibn Abbas* is available in the Whitechapel Ideas Store. In the book Abu Hamza suggested to Muslim readers that they are not obliged to obey man-made laws which contradict the Quran:

“As it is, [the present systems] respect the person who obeys the law even if he is an adulterer, kafir, or a drunkard or even a pagan. As long as he does not contract the man-made laws he is still a citizen in good standing, which [sic] believers enjoining good and evil is classed as a criminal, wrongdoer, fanatics, terrorists and in some cases even executed.” [p.35]

In the book Abu Hamza also tells Muslims that they should not assist the authorities non-Islamic government which is fighting against Islamists who want to oppose Sharia law:

“We appeal for every good, sincere Muslim that if they cannot fight and remove those leaders and their armies from power, they should at least not hinder the path of others to do it.” [p.47]

Sheikh Abdullah al-Faisal

Tower Hamlets libraries contain two books and four copies of taped lectures by Sheikh Abdullah al-Faisal. In 2003 al-Faisal, a black convert from Jamaica, was convicted of ‘incitement to murder’ and jailed for seven years for preaching that Jews should be killed and that young Muslims should receive military training so that they could “kill all unbelievers”. In 2007, al-Faisal was released and deported to Jamaica.

The libraries contain two copies of one of al-Faisal’s books called *Natural Instincts (Islamic Psychology)* which are stocked in Watney Market Library and the Whitechapel Ideas Store. In the book, he notes in the preface that “the main ideas of this book was [sic] extracted from the book at al-Fitrah compiled by the eminent scholar Salman al-Awda” [p.4]. Al-Awda is a one-time opponent of the Saudi royal family who was associated with bin Laden in the early 1990s.

Al-Faisal’s book *Natural Instincts* is filled with a deep hatred of non-Muslims whom he refers to as ‘kafirs’:

“Unfortunately the world today is being governed by the kafirs. Therefore the television, radio, newspapers, magazines as well as the national curriculum of the education system is in their hands. The kafirs are the henchmen of the Shaitaan.” [p.78]

Elsewhere he says that kafirs are to blame for pornography:

“The Shaitaan [devil] loves to look at the nakedness of others therefore any society where the kafir are in control that society becomes saturated with pornographic materials.” [p.66 – 67]

He then tells readers that they should hate non-Muslims without exception:

“Whenever the believer meets people who reject faith in Allah or His messenger Muhammad or Islam, he abhors such people even though they may be his own family members. This natural instinct is acquired. You acquire it after you become a believer in Islam. This is called *al-Walaa’ Wal-Baraa’* i.e. loving and hating solely for the sake of Allah.” [p.69]

Al-Faisal adds that Islamic world would be more successful if Muslims showed more hatred towards non-Muslims:

“One of the main reasons why the Muslims today are unsuccessful is because we love the kafirs and abhor each other.” [p.70]

He mixes conspiracy theories with a worldview which presents all existence as a conflict between Muslims and non-Muslims:

“One of the first and foremost reasons for marriage is to produce children so that this Ummah will become strong in number. The kafirs know this and this is the reason they are quick to have Muslim women giving birth by caesarian section so as to limit the number of children they can have. They like to search for reasons to take Muslim children away so that they will be brought up the kafir state [sic] with kafir aqeeda values. If the Muslim child should have a child from a Christian wife the kafir courts always give custody to the wife in the case of a battle for the child, because the hearts of the kafir are alike.” [p.41]

He also tells readers that there is no substitute for violent jihad against non-Muslims:

“There are Muslims today who dislike the mentioning of the word “jihad” in their presence. They claim there is no need for jihad today because we can assume power by the use of democratic means i.e. the ballot box. Those gullible and unwise Muslims do not realize that the only language the kafirs respect is jihad ... Jihad cannot be replaced by other methodologies, for establishing the truth. If there was any other way that was more effective than jihad the others would have used it.” [p.74]

A few pages later, on page 81, al-Faisal writes that loving life and fearing death has caused Muslims to lose their enthusiasm for jihad:

“One of the most dominant and overpowering instincts in us is to love life and fear death. This instinct is dominant in us to the extent where the Shaitaan has been successful in using it today to make us turn our backs on jihad.” [p.81]

In addition to *Natural Instincts*, Tower Hamlets libraries stock several copies of recordings of al-Faisal's sermons. These are *al-Quran – the ultimate miracle* (possibly withdrawn from circulation), *Human Rights in Islam* (two copies) and *Tafseer Surah Fatiha* (also apparently withdrawn from circulation).

Other strands of extremist thought

Hizb ut-Tahrir

Tower Hamlets libraries stock a range of books by Hizb ut-Tahrir, an extremist organisation which wants to create a caliphate and then wage war on all non-Muslim states until they either accept Islam or agree to be ruled by Muslims. The group is banned in a number of countries such as Germany, where it is proscribed for its anti-Semitic views.

The group's books which are stocked in Tower Hamlets libraries are generally not published under the name of Hizb ut-Tahrir. Instead they are attributed to al-Khalifah Publications and often only have the group's former website address (www.khalifah.com) on their back covers.

Most of the group's books are dedicated to explaining elements of the group's political programme. For example, *The Methodology of Hizb ut-Tahrir for Change* (London, 1999) tells Muslim readers that they should struggle against non-Muslim ideologies and systems until the whole world is put under Islamic laws:

“The vital issue for Muslims in the whole world is the re-establishment of the rule of Allah through establishing the Khalifah and appointing a Khalifa for the Muslims who is given the pledge (Bai'a) on the Book of Allah and the traditions (Sunnah) of His Prophet, in order to demolish the rules of Kufr and to replace them with the laws of Islam both in implementation and application, to transfer the Muslim lands to Dar ul-Islam (Land of Islam), to make society in Muslim lands an Islamic society, and to carry the message of Islam to the world by invitation and *Jihad*.” [p.4]

In *Funds in the Khilafah State* by Abdul Qadeem Zalloom (London, 1999), the author explains that under Hizb ut-Tahrir's proposed caliphate, the Islamic state would allow the taking of a person's life and property if they renounced Islam:

“The person who apostatises from Islam whether male or female, to another Deen like Judaism, Christianity, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism or a non-religious belief like Communism, becomes one whose blood is not protected and, consequently, one whose property is not protected... The mere apostasy of the apostate gives the Muslims the right to shed his blood and seize his property. Killing him and seizing his property are, however, dependent upon asking him to repent. If he is asked to repent for three days, refuses to repent and does not return to Islam then it is obligatory to kill him immediately and seize his property and this becomes *Fai'* for Muslims.” [p.110 – 111]

The same book also says that under an Islamic state, non-Muslims should be forced to pay a discriminatory tax known as the Jizya:

“Jizya is a right that Allah allowed the Muslims to take from the Kuffar, in return for their submission to the rule of Islam.” [p.56]

The book also says that an Islamic state should set up a special government department to monitor non-Muslims (referred to as ‘the ahl az-zimma’), and ensure that they pay the discriminatory jizya tax:

“A special register should be made for all the Ahl az-Zimma according to their religions and sects which is kept in the department of Jizya. It should contain all the necessary information regarding their date of birth, age, death and financial status in order to be the basis for estimating the amount of the Jizya.” [p.60]

Another Hizb ut-Tahrir book stocked by Tower Hamlets libraries by Zalloom, *How the Khalifah was Destroyed* (London, 2000), tells readers that violence between Muslims and non-Muslims must continue until everyone has been converted to Islam:

“The fierce struggle between the Islamic thoughts and the Kufr thoughts, and between the Muslims and the Kuffar, has been intense ever since the dawn of Islam ... It will continue in this way – a bloody struggle alongside the intellectual struggle – until the Hour comes and Allah inherits the Earth and those on it. This is why Kufr is an enemy of Islam, and this is why the Kuffar will be the enemies of Muslims as long as there is Islam and Kufr in this world.” [p.1]

Ahmad Thomson

Tower Hamlets libraries stock 11 copies of books by Ahmad Thomson, the deputy-chairman of the Association of Muslim Lawyers. Thomson acted as an advisor to the UK government on Islamic issues until the media revealed that he had written that Jews and Freemasons had conspired to run the global economy in his book *The New World Order*. The libraries stock seven copies of his 1997 book *Dajjal: The Anti-Christ* – including five in Bengali – as well as seven copies of *Jesus: Prophet of Islam* which he co-authored. The libraries also stock several books by Thomson’s spiritual guide, Abd al-Qadir al-Murabit, a failed actor who once referred to Hitler as “the only mujahid of the century”.

Views on women

In addition to having numerous works of Wahhabist and pro-jihadist literature, Tower Hamlets libraries stock numerous Islamic books on women which are actively hostile to women's rights.

In the council library in Watney Market, there is a copy of *Women who deserve to go to hell* by Mansoor Abdul Hakim, published by Darul Ishaat, a UK-based publishing house. On page 15, the author writes that:

“We have no intention to accuse women when we say that they will be in a majority in hell.”

Similar sentiments are found in *Wisdom of the Wise*, a collection of hadiths compiled by Abdulaziz ibn Nasir al-Jalil and Baha Addin ibn Fatah Aqeel (London, 2000) of which seven copies are held in Tower Hamlets libraries – including three in the Whitechapel Ideas Store.

In the concluding chapter of a separate pro-polygamy book entitled *Polygamy – A malady or a remedy* by Arfaque Malik (London, 1993), the author writes that:

“A return to polygamy, the natural relationship between the sexes would remedy many evils, prostitution, venereal diseases, abortion, the misery of illegitimate children, the misfortune of millions of unmarried women, resulting from the disproportion between the sexes, adultery and even jealousy, since the disregarded wife would find consolation in her cognizance of not being secretly deceived by her husband.” [p.42]

Having thus argued that polygamy can make wives feel less jealous when their husbands sleep with other women, the book concludes that “polygamy is A REMEDY and NOT A MALADY [sic]”. [p.43] The book was published by the UK Islamic Mission.

In addition to these books, there are many other Islamic books in Tower Hamlets' libraries with a similar perspective such as Islam forbids the free mixing of men and women by Muhammad Iqbal Siddiqi (two copies), the *Islamic Dress Code for Women*, published by Saudi firm Darussalam (three copies) and *Islamic Fataawa Regarding Women* which collects relevant fatwas from senior conservative Saudi clerics like bin Baaz, al-Uthaymeen and ibn Jibreen (14 copies).

At the same time, however the libraries do stock a small number of texts which present a more positive view of the role of women in Islam society such as *Inside the Gender Jihad* by Amina Wadud (two copies), *Women claim Islam, Creating Islamic feminism through literature* by Miriam Cooke (one copy) and Tariq Ramadan's *The critical role*

of women in the Islamic revival (two copies). However the small numbers of such texts inevitably mean that their reforming message is overshadowed by the great number of conservative and traditionalist texts also stocked.

Non-violent Islamists and other writers

Compared to the massive stocks of pro-jihadist and salafi authors, the libraries' holdings of more moderate writers who do not advocate systematic violence towards non-Muslims are relatively slight. For instance, while Bilal Philips – a relatively unknown Salafi preacher – has around 80 copies of books and audiotapes stocked, the libraries stock only 70 copies of works by Hamza Yusuf, a popular mainstream American preacher. This disparity becomes even more obvious when one considers that Tower Hamlets' libraries stock several hundred books by the leading ideologues of conservative Islam. For instance, while the libraries stock only 39 copies of books and recordings by Tariq Ramadan – regarded by some as one of Europe's most significant Islamic thinkers – the libraries stock 26 copies of the single book *Towards Understanding Islam* by Abu Ala al-Maududi, the founder of Jamaat-e-Islami.

Tariq Ramadan

There are 39 copies of Tariq Ramadan's various books in the Tower Hamlets' libraries – including copies of two audiobooks. The most stocked book is Ramadan's *Islam, the west and the challenges of modernity* (12 copies), followed by *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam* (10 copies) and *To be a European Muslim* (7 copies). Two audiobooks are also stocked, *The Critical Role of Women in the Islamic Revival* and *Muslims in Western Countries*; there are two copies of each.

Ramadan's books are heavily stocked by the Whitechapel Ideas Store and less so by other libraries. Some of the books are translated into Bengali.

Hamza Yusuf

There are 70 works listed under the name of Hamza Yusuf, an American convert to Islam who has become a popular preacher. Many of the works are 'talking books' and are often recorded speeches of his talks and lectures. His most stocked work is an audiobook called *The Life of the Prophet Muhammad*. A high proportion of the works are listed as 'on-loan' – strongly suggesting that there is a greater demand for such works than for the many salafi texts which are on the libraries' shelves.

Yusuf Islam

Tower Hamlets libraries stock around 120 copies of books, audiobooks and music CDs by Yusuf Islam (formerly Cat Stevens). However 24 of these are music CDs and many of his other books which are stocked are devotional works or else aim to teach readers basic aspects of Muslim practice. For example, the libraries stock 12 copies of his audiobook *A Simple Guide to Prayer for Beginners*.

Although Yusuf Islam follows a Salafist interpretation of Islam which has many similarities to Wahhabism (for many years he believed that the use of any musical instrument except a drum is haram), there is comparatively little in his books which would foster a radical opposition to Western society.

Jamal Badawi

The libraries of Tower Hamlets stock only two different books by Jamal Badawi, a popular moderate author and activist who is based in Canada – even though he has published 14 different works which try to explain how Muslims should adapt standards of the west – for instance, by arguing against wife-beating and domestic violence. The libraries stock five copies of *Muslim Woman's & Muslim Men's Dress* and 12 copies of *Gender Equity in Islam: Basic Principles* of which five are stocked at Whitechapel Ideas Store.

Irshad Manji

Tower Hamlets libraries stock four copies of *The trouble with Islam – A wake-up call for honesty and change*, the key work by Irshad Manji, a Canadian woman who styles herself as a “Muslim refusenik”.

Sufi writers

In keeping with the libraries' overwhelming numbers of conservative and Islamist texts, Tower Hamlets libraries only stock a small number of works by Sufi authors – even though the Sufi movement has traditionally played a key role in Islamic societies around the world.

For example, the libraries stock 11 books by Shayk Fadlalla Haeri, a well-known Sufi writer born in Iraq. However the libraries do not stock any of Haeri's more important books such as *The Thoughtful Guide to Islam* in which he writes that “there are as many ways to God as there are human beings”. In addition to Haeri's books there are only six copies of the various books of Idries Shah, one of the leading modern-day writers on Sufism although there are a few more scattered works on Sufism in the library collections.

That said, the libraries do stock a considerable number of works by Abu Hamed Muhummmad ibn Muhammad al-Ghazali (1058 – 1111), a Sufi philosopher who is celebrated as one of Islam's greatest thinkers. However al-Ghazali's legacy to religious understanding is deeply ambiguous for his works were scarcely less bellicose than that of any modern-day jihadist. For instance, he wrote not only that Muslim states should raid their non-Muslim neighbours at least once a year but also that in such raids

Muslim soldiers should deliberately attack non-Muslim civilians and destroy their food, trees, homes and “useless books”.

Ahmadi books

By comparison to the vast amounts of Sunni literature there is a single copy of the key text of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the founder of the Ahmadi movement which the Jamaat-e-Islami and other Islamist organisations say is a heretical branch of Islam. The single copy of Ahmad’s key work *The philosophy of the teachings of Islam* is listed under ‘Outreach Services’ rather than in any walk-in library – suggesting that it can only be collected from mobile libraries if ordered. There is a similar dearth of books by Shia writers.

Other writers

In addition, there are very few books by western academics such as Michael Cooke, Patricia Crone or John Wansbrough who have critically examined the early years of Islam and questioned traditional accounts of Muhammad’s life. Despite this lack of critical works, the library does stock *The Image of the Prophet Muhammad in the West*, a book produced by the Islamic Foundation in Leicester, which attacks three similar “orientalist” Quranic historians (Montgomery Watt, William Muir and David Margoliouth) for being insufficiently “objective” – even though Tower Hamlets does not even stock any books by these three writers.

By comparison, there are many books in the Christianity sections of the libraries which challenge traditional accounts of Jesus’ life; for example, *The Gnostic Bible*, *Bloodline of the Holy Grail* and *Jesus papers: Exposing the biggest cover-up in history*. In addition to these quasi-academic works, the libraries also contain numerous books by Muslim authors attacking traditional Christian beliefs, such as *Jesus: A prophet of Islam* by Muhammad Aatur-Rahim and *The True Message of Jesus Christ* by Bilal Philips.

However Tower Hamlet’s libraries do stock nine copies of two books by Ayaan Hirsi Ali who has criticised aspects of Islam. There are five copies of her *Caged Virgin*, a book about the treatment of women in Islamic society and four copies of *Infidel*, her autobiography. In many more cases however the library simply does not stock works by authors who criticise Wahhabi ideology, such as Stephen Schwartz, an American Sufi who wrote *The Two Faces of Islam: Saudi Fundamentalism and its role in Terrorism*, a book highly critical of Saudi Arabia and Wahhabism, nor any books by ibn Warraq such as *Why I am not a Muslim*.

Other libraries' collections

Other UK libraries contain scattered collections of pro-jihadist material but few stock quantities of extremist Islamist texts which are comparable with the material found in Tower Hamlets collections. However there is some evidence to suggest that the problem found in Tower Hamlets may well exist elsewhere. For example, public libraries in both Waltham Forest and Birmingham stock a large number of extreme Wahhabi-influenced Islamist books.

Waltham Forest

Like Tower Hamlets, the London borough of Waltham Forest has a large population of Muslim South Asians. Perhaps as a result, the borough's libraries stock a large selection of works by leaders of Jamaat-e-Islami. The libraries' catalogues list almost 70 books by Abu Ala Maududi (50 listed under 'Maududi' and a further 17 under 'Mawdudi') of which almost half are in Bengali or Urdu. In addition the libraries stock 20 books by Dilwar Hussain Sayeedi, around half of which are audiobooks. The libraries also contain three different books by Khurshid Ahmad, who helped found Leicester's Islamic Foundation which has been closely linked to senior members of the Jamaat-e-Islami.

In addition to stocking books by some of the leaders of Jamaat-e-Islami, the libraries of Waltham Forest also stock multiple copies of significant texts by leading Wahhabi clerics and members of the Muslim Brotherhood. For instance the libraries stock four copies of *Islamic Guidelines for Social and Individual Reform* by Muhammad bin Jamil Zino, the Saudi writer, as well as three copies of *Selected writings* by Shaheed Hassan al-Banna, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood. Wahhabi thought is further represented by the libraries' three copies of a Bengali translation of Bilal Philips' *Islamic Monotheism*, two copies of *Concerning Taraaweeh* by bin Baaz and one copy of *An explanation of Abdul-Wahhab's Four principles of Shirk* by Qadhi Abu Ammaar Yasir. In addition, the libraries stock two copies of *Muslims Under Non-Muslim Rule* by Yahya Michot which aims to rehabilitate Ibn Taymiyya.

Birmingham

Another city whose public libraries stock a range of extremist Islamist material is Birmingham. The district's library catalogue lists least 60 different works by Maududi (although some of those listed are single volumes from larger multi-volume collections and others are held in multiple copies). In addition the libraries hold four copies of books by Ibn Taymiyya and three copies of *Milestones* by Sayyid Qutb. In addition, the library holds several works by Wahhabi scholars such as *Kitab al-Tawheed* by Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhab and the *Book of Tawheed* by Saleh al-Fozan. However

these holdings are at least partly offset by the significant holdings of books by more moderate authors such as Tariq Ramadan. The libraries hold 14 copies of five of his books. In addition, there are signs that some of the more radical books have been withdrawn from circulation; for instance although the catalogue lists one book each by Mohammad bin Jamil Zino and Sheikh Abdullah al-Faisal, neither work has a shelf number listed.

Blackburn

Blackburn stocks relatively few Islamist books compared with some other libraries. However a significant proportion of them are extremist. While the library stocks only five books by Maududi, one of those is his *Jihad in Islam*, for example. In addition the library stocks one copy of the *Islamic Creed Based on the Quran and Sunna* by Muhammad bin Jamil Zino and one copy of the *Kitab al-Tawheed* by ibn Abdul Wahhab. In addition, the library stocks nine copies of books by Ahmad Thomson. Also prominent are numbers of books which promote highly conservative attitudes to women such as *The Islamic Dress Code for Women* by Mahmoud Ridha Murad (two copies), *Islamic Teachings for Women* published by Darussalam and *The Rights and Duties of Women in Islam* by Abdul Ghaffar Hasan, also published by Darussalam. However, the potency of this extremist literature (and the relatively small numbers of books held) may be at least partially diluted by the presence of similar numbers of works by authors such as Tariq Ramadan and Irshad Manji as well as by substantial numbers of academic works on political Islam.

Other cities

Although many other cities have almost equally large Muslim populations, they rarely stock the massive preponderance of conservative and extremist texts seen in the libraries of Tower Hamlets, Waltham Forest and Birmingham. For instance, the public libraries of Leicester stock only 10 copies of books by Maududi – compared to Tower Hamlets libraries which stock 61 of Maududi's separate works (not including multiple copies).

Elsewhere in the country, searches of library catalogues reveal only scattered collections of fundamentalist texts. For instance, Ealing libraries stock one copy of Bilal Philips' work (*Fundamentals of Tawheed*), ten volumes of Sayyid Qutb's *In the Shade of the Quran* (but none of his other works such as *Milestones*) and eight copies of various books by Maududi. Some other council libraries (such as Nottinghamshire) also list books by Abu Hamza, however these frequently have no shelf-number listed and thus may have been withdrawn from circulation.

Conclusion

It is to be expected – and indeed applauded – that public libraries in areas with large Muslim populations should be receptive and responsive to the interests of local people. However it now appears that because of mistakes by library staff, or the presence of ideologues in the library system, a number of publicly-funded libraries – in Tower Hamlets, Waltham Forest, Birmingham and Blackburn – now stock excessively large collections of certain Islamic texts designed to incite hatred and violence.

In the opinion of the authors of this report, there is no harm in libraries stocking a small number of radical Islamic texts alongside a larger number of mainstream Islamic works and critical texts – just as a copy of Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* could be legitimately stocked in sections dealing critically with the Third Reich. However if the Second World War section of a library was stocked largely with books by Hitler and his followers, or if such books were stocked in a libraries’ ‘spirituality’ or ‘self-help’ section, questions would rightly be asked. Equally it is unhelpful for libraries to present books by radical authors such as Maududi, Qutb and ibn Abdul Wahhab as neutral guides to Islamic practices and beliefs.

It is not the aim of this study to point fingers and ask how so many libraries, including eight council-run libraries in the heart of Tower Hamlets (one of the UK’s most Muslim areas), have become saturated with extreme Islamist books. Certainly negligence has played a role; maybe senior library staff are unaware of the content of books in Arabic, Bengali and Urdu. However, the huge number of such books, in all languages, makes it unlikely that so many intolerant, and often violent, texts could have been acquired purely by accident. Whatever the cause, it is time that the UK’s library services regained control of their collections.



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