

Weekly News Summary



Friday 26th November 2010

Key Issues

“British Schools, Islamic Rules”

The BBC Panorama programme, “British Schools, Islamic Rules”, broadcast on Monday 22nd November, examined a network of more than 40 weekend schools across Britain which reportedly teach the national curriculum used in Saudi Arabia to children aged between six and eighteen. The programme also claimed it had exposed a loophole in teaching at weekend schools as they are not subject to Ofsted inspection and their curriculums are not scrutinised.

Several newspapers highlighted the warning made by think-tanks Policy Exchange and the Quilliam Foundation that the new free schools were “vulnerable” targets to extremism.

Key points

- The Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove said:

“Saudi Arabia is a sovereign country. I have no desire or wish to intervene in the decisions that the Saudi government makes in its own education system. But I’m clear that we cannot have anti-Semitic material of any kind being used in English schools. Ofsted is doing some work in this area; they’ll be reporting to me shortly about how we can ensure that part-time provision (weekend schools) is better registered and better inspected in the future”.

- The Saudi Arabian Embassy has said:

"Any tutoring activities that may have taken place among any other group of Muslims in the United Kingdom are absolutely individual to that group and not affiliated to or endorsed by the Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia."

Associated articles:

[BBC Panorama Website](#) – Please click here for more information about the programme

[The Guardian](#) – The BBC claim some Islamic schools have text books which feature anti-semitism and homophobia

The Home Secretary loses legal fight over 7/7 inquests

On Monday, the Home Secretary Theresa May lost her legal challenge to hold closed sessions of the 7/7 inquests to allow the coroner to hear and take account of sensitive evidence.

Coroner Lady Justice Hallett previously rejected calls from Security Service and the Home Secretary to keep some of the hearings closed to allow her to examine highly sensitive material in private. The majority of evidence would still have been heard in public regardless of whether the challenge had been successful or not.

Counsel for the Home Secretary had argued that the Coroner could hold closed hearings by virtue of the Coroner’s Rules, which allow for the exclusion of the “public” in the interests of national security. Counsel’s view was that “the public” included anyone, including interested persons. Some families of the victims supported our arguments, which were put forward with a view to ensuring that the Coroner can see and take account of as much information as possible. The Coroner ruled that while she had the power to exclude the wider general public and press, the Coroner’s Rules did not extend to the exclusion of interested parties. The Divisional Court upheld the Coroner’s ruling at Judicial Review.



Some of the families representatives argued against the Home Secretary's challenge, arguing that **all** evidence should be heard in public. The Home Office made clear that "it was committed to co-operating fully with the Coroner's inquests. Along with many of the victims' families, we believe a closed hearing for a small part of the July 7 inquests would be the best way for the Coroner to consider as much information as possible. The court has decided this is not possible and we will consider the judgment carefully".

Lord Justice Maurice Kay and Lord Justice Stanley Burnton, both Appeal Court judges sitting in the High Court, announced their decision to the Home Secretary's challenge in a brief hearing on Monday and will give their full reasons at a later date.

Key Points

- The Inquest into the July 2005 bombings began on October 11th.
- A Coroner's inquest is a process for investigating factual circumstances of a death.
- Coroners are independent judicial officers who work within a legal framework established by Act of Parliament.
- The inquests were adjourned pending criminal proceedings which involved both a trial and a re-trial. Once those proceedings had been concluded and after hearing submissions from potentially interested persons, the Coroner decided that the inquests should be resumed.
- The inquests will consider the issue of "preventability" in the New Year.
- The inquests are expected to conclude in March next year.

Associated articles:

[Website of the Inquest into the London Bombings of 7 July 2005](#)
[The Independent](#) – Evidence not to be heard in secret

Other News Stories from this Week:

The following are interesting news items that we think people may want to circulate further:

[Sir Paul Stephenson said most of the country remained "relatively untouched" by terrorism, despite the events of July 7.](#)

In his first major speech on terrorism, the Metropolitan Police Commissioner said that there was a "simple inability to accept the real potential for such devastating, murderous attacks." Sir Paul told an audience at the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) in central London that MI5 had a number of investigations at any one time "which involve the real possibility of a terrorist attack being planned against the United Kingdom." He added that the security service shared his judgment that it was "undoubtedly as dangerous a time as we have seen" since the failed car bomb attacks on the Tiger-Tiger nightclub in London and on Glasgow airport in 2007.

[David Cameron's Eid speech at Number 10 reception](#)

Prime Minister David Cameron delivered a speech on Monday at an Eid reception in Downing Street in which he praised the contribution of British Muslims to national life and the role that British Muslims have to play in the "Big Society." The Prime Minister said "When you look at what British Muslims do think and take part in, I think they have – you have – an enormous role to play in that more generous and tolerant and open society that we all want to build."

[Channel 4's Dispatches on Islamabad](#)

Channel 4's Dispatches documentary team followed the police and people of Islamabad for one year, as Pakistan's capital battles to overcome an unprecedented wave of terrorist attacks, providing a powerful insight into a normally closed world in which everyone battles to survive the daily threat of death with courage and resilience. This episode was broadcast on Monday, November 22nd.