



This paper is for Government departments and statutory organisations dealing with counter-terrorism. It is intended to help you to respond to any concerns generated in communities as a result of the coverage in the media of the CT issues set out in the media coverage summary. It is not intended to provide detailed briefing about Government policies, and explaining these issues to the media is the role of relevant departmental press offices.

Proscription of Muslims Against Crusades (MAC)

On Thursday 10th November the Home Secretary, Theresa May laid an Order in Parliament which will proscribe Muslims Against Crusades. This means being a member of or supporting the organisation will be a criminal offence.

What is proscription?

Under the Terrorism Act 2000, the Home Secretary may proscribe an organisation if she believes it is concerned in terrorism. For the purposes of the Act, this means that it:

- commits or participates in acts of terrorism;
- prepares for terrorism;
- promotes or encourages terrorism (including the unlawful glorification of terrorism); or
- is otherwise concerned in terrorism.

Why has MAC been proscribed?

MAC has been assessed to be simply another name for the organisation which is already proscribed under a number of names. The Home Secretary stated:

“I am satisfied Muslims Against Crusades is simply another name for an organisation already proscribed under a number of names including Al Ghurabaa, The Saved Sect, Al Muhajiroun and Islam4UK. The organisation was proscribed in 2006 for glorifying terrorism and we are clear it should not be able to continue these activities by simply changing its name.”

MAC is being proscribed under section 3(6) of the Act, which gives the Home Secretary powers to list a group which is simply another name for a proscribed organisation or is for all practical purposes the same as a proscribed organisation.

How will proscription affect MAC?

Proscription makes it a criminal offence for a person to belong to or invite support for MAC. It is also a criminal offence to arrange a meeting in support of a proscribed organisation, to wear clothing or to carry articles in public which arouse reasonable suspicion that an individual is a member or supporter of the proscribed organisation.

Will proscription prevent MAC from holding protests?

Policing of individual protests and demonstrations is, of course, an operational matter for the local Police force. Individual members of MAC are subject to the law and the police have the power to take robust action where the law is broken. Proscription makes it an offence for them to be organised by MAC, or in support of MAC, or addressed by a member of MAC. The Government is aware of the need to ensure a careful balance between protecting freedom of speech and protecting the public from terrorism. Glorifying terrorism is not legitimate protest.

Won't MAC just change its name again?

Organisations which cause the Government concern, including those which might change their name to avoid the consequences of proscription, are kept under constant review. The Terrorism Act 2000 enables the Home Secretary to order that a name be treated as another name for a proscribed organisation, as she has done today.

Also, the use of a name which is not listed does not prevent the police from taking action against an individual for proscription offences if it can be proved that the non-listed name is in fact the same as a proscribed organisation.

Will the Government also be proscribing the English Defence League (EDL)?

The Government does not routinely comment on whether an organisation is or is not under consideration for proscription.

A decision to proscribe an organisation must be based on a belief that it is concerned in terrorism, as defined in the Terrorism Act 2000, and it must be proportionate. There is at present no evidence to suggest that members of the EDL are involved in terrorist activity. Individual members of EDL are subject to the law and the police have the power to take robust action if the law is broken.

Isn't this just about targeting Muslims?

Absolutely not. It is clear that MAC does not represent British Muslims, and many Muslim community groups have spoken out strongly against the organisation and its activities. Proscription is not targeted at any particular faith or social grouping, but is based on the Government's assessment of an organisation's concern in terrorism. Over 50 organisations are currently proscribed including 14 organisations connected to Northern Ireland and organisations seeking to advance a variety of other religious, ethnic, political and nationalist causes.