

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.

Exploitation of community tensions following riots in England

There have been a number of reports after riots in England earlier this week, about individuals and groups attempting to capitalize on community tensions for their own ends.

Who is trying to exploit tensions after the riots?

A small number of individuals and groups have tried to exploit the situation for their own ends. For example, Anjem Choudary made comments about the riots on Twitter suggesting he could encourage more people onto the streets; from a very different point of view, Nick Griffin of the BNP was reported to have described disorder in Enfield as 'a race riot'. Separately, Stephen Lennon of the EDL was reported as having stated he had spent time in Enfield and that there were 100 EDL supporters on the streets of the town.

What is the Government doing to help reduce tensions and protect community relations?

The Home Secretary has agreed to ban a planned march by the EDL in Telford over the weekend of 13-14 August. The Home Secretary said "I have given my consent to a ban on marches in Telford this weekend. It is clear that a ban is needed to ensure communities and property are protected. "What this ban does not do however is stop an EDL presence or a static demonstration in Telford this weekend. West Mercia Police have a significant number of officers being deployed to police any EDL presence. I encourage all local people to work with the police to ensure community relations are not undermined."

Why can't static demonstrations be banned?

Neither the police nor the Home Secretary has any power to ban static demonstrations. The police can, however, restrict the size, location and duration of a static demonstration. The different legal rules for marches and static demonstrations reflect the greater difficulties in managing a moving demonstration.

What has happened since the deaths of the three men in Birmingham?

The police have made arrests in connection with the deaths of the three individuals and are continuing to investigate. The father of one of the victims has appealed for calm. Police and the local authority are bringing all sides of the community together to reduce tensions and community groups and Mosques have also called for calm.

There are rumours circulating in communities that the EDL and other groups are planning to attack Mosques. Is that true?

There are numerous rumours of this kind. They cannot be substantiated. Such rumours are often circulated by isolated individuals trying to promote fear and disorder; often they are simply untrue or gross exaggerations of actual events.

What can be done to deal with threats of this kind?

Police are closely monitoring any tensions and will take the necessary action to protect communities. In addition, in different locations around the country police and local partners are meeting together to discuss

any tensions following the riots and look at how to restore calm. And community organisations such as the Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board (MINAB) have made statements calling for calm

What should I do if I hear of any threats to the community?

The best way to protect the community and strengthen community relations is to report any such threats to local police.

CT Communications

Summary of media coverage

12th August 2011



This paper is for Government departments and statutory organisations dealing with counter-terrorism. It is intended to inform on key CT issues that have been covered in the domestic, overseas and online media during the week and that may be of concern to communities. It provides background and context to issues covered in the CT Talking Points (page 1&2). The CT Talking Points paper gives clear, straightforward answers to issues raised in the media which may be useful to practitioners.

Overview

The following information details media and community reaction to the riots with a specific focus on “extremist” elements of the riots.

UK mainstream media

The predominant focus in the mainstream media centred on comments from acting Metropolitan Police Commissioner Tim Godwin, who warned that Right-wing extremists could “hijack” vigilante patrols protecting against looters. The coverage was limited, but highlighted that Godwin had singled out the English Defence League (EDL) and the British National Party as two organisations who might exploit the situation. This was reported amidst suggestions that the EDL had “successfully infiltrated” vigilante groups in North and South East London.

There was significantly less coverage around Anjem Choudary’s threat to bring a million supporters on to the streets to demand Sharia law.

BAME media & online Forums

There are widespread concerns in the BAME media and online forums about the potential for “extremists” to exploit the riots. The concern focused specifically on the EDL. A number of blogs duplicated reporting which highlighted the threat to mosques in Birmingham from extremists and also reported the attack on a mosque in Newcastle by “youths”. Much of this appears to originate from one or two text messages that have been exaggerated as they have spread.

Pakistani media

There was a significant focus on the death of three Pakistani men killed in Birmingham this week. Much of the coverage focused on an alleged mistreatment of Pakistanis in the UK, and cited the latest riots in the context of the riots in north-west England in 2001. The UK High Commissioner to Pakistan was widely quoted saying that “the violence across the UK is not racially or ethnically motivated”.