

*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.*

### **Proposed EDL march in Tower Hamlets**

The English Defence League (EDL) had planned to march in Tower Hamlets on 3 September 2011. This has generated considerable opposition and attention in the media. The Home Secretary has consented to a Metropolitan Police Banning Order on all marches in Tower Hamlets and four neighbouring boroughs.

#### **What is happening?**

The English Defence League had said they planned to march through Shoreditch and go past the East London Mosque. Following an application from the Metropolitan Police, the Home Secretary has consented to a ban on any marches in the area for thirty days starting from 2 September 2011. The Police are working with the community and local leaders to make sure the weekend of 3 September is policed effectively.

#### **What is the community response to the proposed demonstration?**

There has been a lot of media coverage and objection to the proposed march. Campaigners from the Hope Not Hate East London community group gathered 25,000 names calling on the Metropolitan Police to ask the Home Secretary to ban the march. They presented their petition to Scotland Yard on 18 August.

#### **How can marches be banned?**

Under the Public Order Act 1986, a march can be banned if an application is made to the Home Secretary from the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police or, for marches outside London, if the Home Secretary consents to a ban made by a district council on the application of the relevant police chief constable. The police will only seek a ban if they believe that imposing conditions on the march (such as limiting its size or duration) will be insufficient to prevent serious public disorder. The Home Secretary gives her consent if she is satisfied that this legal test has been met.

If the march is banned, there can still be a static demonstration. Neither the police nor the Home Secretary has any power to ban static demonstrations, although the police can place conditions on its size, location and duration, to manage risks of serious public disorder.

#### **What is the Government's position on demonstrations?**

The Government makes every effort to promote and defend rights to free speech and freedom of assembly. However, the Government strongly opposes any group that attempts to divide or intimidate communities and is committed to tackling extremism in all its forms. People have the right to express their view in public but this is a right that must be used responsibly. We will work with local communities to minimise any threat to community relations, and strengthen community ties by giving power to local people.

Demonstrations should not and cannot be a cover for violent or criminal acts. Individual members of the EDL or any other group – like all members of the public – are subject to the law. Inciting racial hatred or participating in acts of violence are criminal offences and will be investigated and dealt with by the police.

#### **What decision has been taken in this case and why?**

The Home Secretary received an application to ban all marches in Tower Hamlets and four neighbouring boroughs for 30 days starting on 2 September, from the Metropolitan Police. She has agreed to the ban. In taking this decision she has followed the legal tests in the Public Order Act 1986 taking into account the judgement of the police, the right to protest, and also the need to ensure that local communities and property are protected.

**What will happen now?**

The ban on marches does not mean that there will not be static demonstrations in the area. Nor does the ban on marches, on its own, guarantee order. The Metropolitan Police are committed to using their powers to ensure communities and properties are protected and to deal with any criminal acts. They are continuing to talk to protest groups and community groups.

**What should I do if I receive, or hear about, any threats of violence against me or anyone else?**

The best way to protect yourself, and the community, and strengthen community relations, is to report any such threats to local police immediately. We encourage all local people and community leaders to work with the police to make sure community relations are not undermined by public disorder.

# CT Communications

## Summary of media coverage

### 26<sup>th</sup> August 2011

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*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). The CT Talking Points paper gives clear, straightforward answers to issues raised in the media which may be useful to practitioners.*

#### Proposed EDL march in Tower Hamlets

**[DN to be updated with details of latest media coverage prior to issuing.]**

#### **UK mainstream media**

The EDL'S proposed march in Tower Hamlets on 3<sup>rd</sup> September has received widespread coverage. The predominant focus has been on calls for the Home Secretary to ban the march which has come from a broad coalition of local politicians and community groups. The Guardian also featured a call from the Metropolitan police who asked the Home Secretary for a 30 day ban on the EDL holding a march through five London boroughs. A 25,000 strong e petition calling for the ban has also generated media interest. Much of the factual coverage has been framed by suggestions that HMG has ignored the activities of the EDL. Local media has been very active at communicating that the EDL are "not welcome" in Tower Hamlets.

#### **UK BAME media**

So far, the coverage around this specific march has been fairly light but it is clear that where it is covered, it is generating increasing anxiety and concern. The Muslim Weekly reported the widespread opposition to the march but specifically emphasised that "this isn't just an issue for the Muslim community... it's for everyone who cares about the area". Asian Image also covered this specific march but in a broader article condemning EDL activity.