



PRESS RELEASE

Embargoed: 11.05pm, Sunday 21st August 2005

Panorama barks up the wrong tree!

The BBC is widely regarded as a serious and objective outfit, which is why tonight's Panorama programme comes as such a surprise to viewers.

The programme is edited in a highly selective, sensational and unfair manner to present an image of respectable Muslim institutions that is both worrying and inaccurate. We know that there are extremist views in the Muslim community. The Islamic Society of Britain, known for being a moderate and progressive organisation, has challenged many of these views over the years. But some of the institutions that are attacked in the programme, such as the Muslim Council of Britain and the Islamic Foundation are, in fact, mainstream bodies that play a crucial role in encouraging integration, British Muslim identity and active participation of Muslims in British society. Dr Munir Ahmed, ISB President said, "If such organisations are called extremist, then who is left? What does such a programme hope to achieve in the current climate? Is it simply riding on our fears?"

It is the MCB that sent out a letter to mosques and organisations, in the wake of the Madrid bombings, advising them to inform the authorities of any suspicious activities, much to the dislike of more conservative elements in the Muslim community. It is the Islamic Foundation that has pioneered interfaith dialogue with Christians and one of its academics recently partnered an initiative to encourage much needed dialogue with the Jewish community. It has also published books that promote democracy and ask Muslims to be loyal to Britain. The organisations' activities speak for themselves.

We all know how selective editing can be used to misrepresent views and ample evidence of this is given in the MCB's detailed rebuttal of the programme (see the link below). It is also significant, and heartening, to see that individuals who were misquoted in the programme to indirectly criticise the MCB (as well as in last Sunday's articles on the Panorama programme in the *Observer*) have spoken up, clarifying their statements.

It seems the BBC was let down badly by its researchers. Pity.

Notes to Editors:

1. The Islamic Society of Britain (ISB) was established in 1990 in response to the needs of the growing British Muslim community to learn about, and to practice their faith in a British context.
2. For further information please contact the ISB Media representatives on: **0709 201 3614**, or please visit: www.isb.org.uk.
3. The MCB's response to the Panorama programme can be found on: www.mcb.org.uk/Panorama_response.doc
4. The Islamic Foundation's publications include: *To be a European Muslim* (1999), *British Muslims between Assimilation and Segregation* (2004) and *British Muslims: Loyalty and Belonging* (2003).