



## Extremists target British teachers with death threats

UK TEACHERS have said they received death threats from extremists allegedly trying to gain control of school governing bodies when they tried to tackle the subject of homophobia.

Threats and intimidation tactics have included dead dogs and cats hanging on school railings in areas where the Muslim population is high.

Addressing an annual teachers' conference in Liverpool, headteachers

claimed a fresh campaign of intimidation against them following the so-called Trojan Horse scandal, which involved Islamist extremists attempting to control the governing bodies of schools in Birmingham.

Sarah Hewitt-Clarkson, head of Anderton Park School in Birmingham, told the conference: "Trojan Horse has not gone away. Those who were involved knew it was the tip of the ice-

berg. We still have dead animals hung on the gates of schools, dismembered cats on playgrounds. We have petitions outside schools, objecting to teaching against homophobia."

Hewitt-Clarkson (left) said she had been sent a death threat on social media, in which someone had written "any headteacher who teaches my children it's alright to be gay will be at the end of my shotgun."

She claimed the threat directed at her on Facebook had homophobic comments. UK education secretary Nicky Morgan said she had been made aware of some of these issues in Birmingham and the government was taking action to tackle the issue.

She said: "There is no place for extremism in our schools and we continue to work to eliminate it. But this is not going to happen overnight."

THE BIG ISSUE: (From left) Rashad Yakoob; Rachel Jolley; Jo Sidhu; Anshuman Mondal; and David Wolfe



## Expressing a different view

### GROUP DEBATES RELIGION AND LEGISLATION

by REENA KUMAR

A GROUP of lawyers and academics gathered for a lively debate on freedom of expression, discussing whether legislation should protect the right to cause religious offence.

It follows the terrifying events in Paris earlier this year where bloodshed was brought to the streets of the city after twelve people were killed by Islamic terrorists.

Audience members at the Society of Asian Lawyers (SAL) event, which was chaired by president Jo Sidhu QC, heard whether blasphemy laws needed to be brought back.

The conversation was sparked when staff at the satirical French magazine *Charlie Hebdo* were targeted by extremists after publishing controversial cartoons depicting the Prophet Muhammad.

Those presenting ideas at last month's event included David Wolfe QC from Matrix Chambers; Rachael Jolley, editor of *Index on Censorship*; author Anshuman Mondal, who recently penned

*Islam and Controversy*; and Rashad Yaqoob, solicitor and founder of The City Circle.

Jo Sidhu QC said: "As British Asian lawyers, we feel that freedom of expression is fundamental to a tolerant and pluralistic society and to our ability to represent and protect the clients we serve. The debate was extremely well-attended and our high calibre speakers truly engaged the audience."

"We addressed why a secular country like the UK allows people to criticise and even offend religious feelings, and whether the law should be changed to ban insults to religion. I am glad to say that our lawyers were overwhelmingly against bringing back blasphemy laws."

The Society for Asian Lawyers, which has existed for almost 25 years, represents minorities working in the UK legal field, and works to enhance diversity in the legal profession and judiciary.

It recently donated £200 to a Movement Against Xenophobia (MAX) poster campaign which aims to highlight the valuable contribution immigrants make to the UK.

## Gurkhas mark grim anniversary

NEPALESE soldiers in the British army – the Gurkhas – marked the 200th anniversary of their brigade's foundation last Thursday (30) in an event marred by the devastating earthquake in their homeland.

As dozens of British survivors from the quake returned home to their loved ones in emotional scenes at London's Stansted Airport, some 200 Gurkhas marched in the city centre and prayed for Nepal.

"To see these heart-wrenching pictures, I am just praying," said captain Gary Ghale, 60, formerly of the 6th Queen Elizabeth's Own Gurkha Rifles.

"I'm praying help reaches

people in time and there is proper sanitation because the aftermath can kill more people than the earthquake itself."

A military transport carrying 18 Gurkha soldiers flew out last Monday (4) to assist relief efforts after the disaster, which killed more than 5,500 people.

Britain announced last Thursday it was to send three Royal Air Force Chinook helicopters as part of the aid effort.

Gurkha major Dev Gurung stressed the commemorations "must go on" to "remember those who lost lives over 200 years of service and those recently in the natural disaster."

James Robertson, com-

manding officer of the Brigade of Gurkhas, said the quake made the commemorations "additionally poignant".

The soldiers marched past Buckingham Palace to the Gurkha Memorial Statue on Whitehall, which carries the inscription "bravest of the brave, most generous of the generous, never had country more faithful friends than you".

At the centre of proceedings was the Queen's Truncheon, the ceremonial staff and symbol of loyalty awarded to the Gurkhas by Queen Victoria.

Soldiers laid a wreath at the memorial before the unveiling of two new bronze plates.

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