

Lapido Media is an internationally networked, British-based philanthro-media charity working to change understanding of religion's impact on world affairs.

Autumn 2014

Lapido's Director gives evidence in proposed mosque appeal

DIRECTOR OF Lapido Media Dr Jenny Taylor was called as an expert witness during evidence into the proposed so-called 'megamosque' in West Ham.

Speaking at the second planning enquiry at London's Excel Conference Centre in June, Dr Taylor explained the group behind the mosque, also known as Riverine Centre or Masjid Ilyas, discourage their followers from having social contact with non-Muslims, thereby 'creating enclaves or a ghetto mindset by default'.

The enquiry was launched after Tablighi Jama'at, which means 'preaching group', who hail from India and were founded during the British Raj to reinforce the faith of the subcontinent's Muslim population, appealed Newham Council's rejection of a proposed 9,500 capacity mosque in West Ham.

Dr Taylor said the Tablighi Jama'at ethos was 'exclusive and anti-social' and the group did not permit gender equality, freedom for women of almost any kind, or social integration.

Dr Taylor was called after Muslim witnesses opposed to the megamosque withdrew. One female witness claimed she had been intimidated.

Dr Taylor said she may be the only non-Muslim from Britain ever to visit the international centre of Tablighi Jama'at in Delhi. (see <http://bit.ly/1wo1aEi>) She had been courteously received into the women's quarters, but had had to conduct her interview with an elder with her back to him.

The founder of the campaign group, MegaMosqueNoThanks, Alan Craig, said Dr Taylor was a 'key witness' who 'showed conclusively that TJ shunned wider society', and were 'pretending to reach out' for the sake of the inquiry.



A TABLIGHI JAMAAT MOTHER IN EAST LONDON.

(Photo: Jeremy Hunter)

'Jenny said that to expect the neo-fundamentalist mosque backers – Tablighi Jama'at – to promote social inclusion – a condition of planning - was like "expecting a pear tree to produce potatoes", and she's right.'

Other witnesses also highlighted that the figures produced by the mosque trustees showed the proposed venue would be under-utilised for 98% of the year due to adequate mosque provision elsewhere. The site was wanted for specific mass gatherings or ijtemas, and Islamic training.

Cambridge-based mosque architects NRAP on the other hand have

promoted the project as a prestige religious site, one of the largest and most remarkable in Europe.

'Given the physical stature of the building, the intelligence of the architectonic solution, the grace and subtlety of the architectural language . . . [we] can be confident that this is a building which will, justifiably, rank itself with the major religious buildings of Europe', says planning barrister Christopher Boyle QC.

The Secretary of State, Eric Pickles' decision on the planning appeal has been deferred to 16 February 2015, after the planning inspector fell ill writing his report.

Read Dr Taylor's blog 'Another Trojan Horse' about how the proposed mosque risks 'consolidating fundamentalism, fearfulness and misogyny, at <http://bit.ly/1oYbr9Q>.



A growing team

Recent months have, as Lapido anticipated, seen religion dominate the news agenda. The growth of so-called Islamic State (ISIS) coupled with the recent Gaza war has again brought the need for religiously literate reporting to the fore. Lapido has always anticipated the hunger for accurate reporting by creating a new platform to meet the need. The expanding team includes:



ANDREW GREEN

ANDREW GREEN is a freelance journalist, and Editor of **LapidoMedia.com**. He previously worked overseas in disaster response teams for aid agencies including Medair and Tearfund in Darfur, Sudan, Liberia and Zimbabwe.

His background is in PR and communications for aid agencies, and he trained in magazine journalism at London College of Printing.

Andrew says, 'If religion feels like it's in a foreign country when it appears in the news, then Lapido is its ambassador – seeing that it gets properly represented and takes its rightful place in the thick of today's journalism.'



SLOK GYAWALI

SLOK GYAWALI is based in New Delhi, India. His writing focuses on the wider implications of Indian politics, particularly focusing on its impact on neighbouring countries. He has a Masters in International Relations from South Asian University, and a Bachelor of Science in Political Science from Truman State University, Missouri, USA. He has written for a number of regional and international magazines and newspapers including <http://futurechallenges.org>, Fair Observer, India Writes Network, Republica, and The Kathmandu Post. Follow him on twitter <https://twitter.com/slokgyawali>.



MARC SHOFFMAN

MARC SHOFFMAN is an NCTJ-qualified multi-media journalist who since graduating from Bournemouth University in 2005 has written for Pink News, Jewish News, Financial Times Business and the MailOnline. He has experience writing about the Middle East, inter-faith and the Jewish community, and his work has a strong focus on equality and standing up for those without a voice.

Marc says Lapido Media 'brings religion into the public sphere and recognises it as something that is part of the news agenda rather than a hobby people do on a weekend.'

'I am keen to work with Lapido Media to show the positive influence religion can have in areas such as politics, finance and the workplace and emphasise how it can unite different communities more than it divides.'

TOP FIVE

stories this summer

Here are five of the top stories the team have been working on recently...

- 'Three Choices' and the bitter harvest of denial: How dissimulation about Islam is fuelling genocide in the Middle East, by Mark Durie <http://bit.ly/1tYopXG>
- Analysis: Why it matters that ISIS is not 'a Sunni outfit' as reported by Irfan Al-Alawi <http://bit.ly/1r3a75Y>
- 'Academics lied about nature of jihad': Extraordinary claim increases government pressure to rescue Iraq's terrified minorities, by Jenny Taylor <http://bit.ly/1xyjgm>
- Gaza's only Christian hospital struggles after being hit by Israeli airstrike, by Sam Hailes <http://bit.ly/1qTU0qX>
- Is the so-called Islamic State Islamic? By Jenny Taylor <http://bit.ly/1s4LibR>

Lesslie Newbigin Summer Institute launched

LAPIDO FOUNDER Dr Jenny Taylor was one of four presenters at the inaugural Newbigin Summer Institute event at Trinity Hall, Cambridge in July, speaking of Bishop Lesslie Newbigin's inspirational call to subvert the West's life-denying secular settlement. Major US backers of the Newbigin House of Studies in San Francisco who funded the event are behind talks to continue the great man's legacy. Plans are still under wraps, but a second week-long colloquium is planned for 2015.



NEWBIGIN INSTITUTE: MISSION TO THE SECULAR SETTLEMENT



PROPHETIC LEGACY: PARTICIPANTS FROM FOUR CONTINENTS WITH NEWBIGIN INSTITUTE FOUNDERS PAUL WESTON (FRONT ROW 2ND FROM RIGHT) AND SCOT SHERMAN 3RD FROM LEFT).



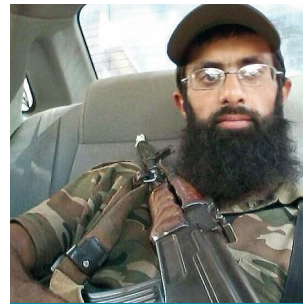
DR JENNY TAYLOR ADDRESSING THE NEWBIGIN SUMMER INSTITUTE.



NEWBIGIN
HOUSE OF STUDIES

Radicalism changes the interfaith agenda

DESPITE EXCELLENT interfaith relations among senior clerics and mosque leaders in leafy High Wycombe, this small market town nestled in the Chilterns is the current focus of Britain's worst nightmare.



OMAR HUSSAIN OF HIGH WYCOMBE AKA 'AWLAKI'
Photo: Newsnight

Former Morrison's shelf stacker Omar Hussain worked there before taking the twisted route to Raqqa in Syria – and jihadi infamy. Boasting on Twitter of how he witnessed the beheading of US journalist James Foley, he, under his nom de guerre 'Awlaki', will enter the nation's consciousness as one of the most degraded criminal minds of recent British history.

Dr Jenny Taylor addressed High Wycombe's Council for Christian and Muslim Relations on 25 September at the invitation of former Mayor, Chairman Councillor Chauhdri Shafique MBE, to open up a conversation with leading imams and clergy about radicalisation. She said that it demonstrated how interfaith work though vital, can fail to reach the parts that need it most. She and Chauhdri are set to write a joint paper examining Islamism in High Wycombe for a follow-up workshop to be held in November. It will include evidence from recent research by Queen Mary University of London which suggested that Muslims most likely to become radicalised show a mix of depression, social isolation, material comfort - and being second or third-generation migrants who 'can afford to indulge some of the ideas of grievance'. It will also look at how young Muslims are taught to use Qur'an verses.



'LEAFY': HIGH WYCOMBE

DR JENNY TAYLOR has joined the editorial advisory board of Lausanne Global Analysis which delivers strategic and credible information and insight from an international network of analysts to equip Christian leaders around the world.

THREE NEW AMBASSADORS

BBC presenter Roger Ballard, a Chairman of the Sandford St Martin Trust; Canon Andrew Wheeler, recipient of a rare Lambeth Doctorate awarded in 2005 by the Archbishop of Canterbury for his contribution to the study of African Christianity and his encouragement of Sudanese historical and theological thinking; and Canon Guy Wilkinson, former Inter Religion Secretary at Lambeth Palace, have become Lapido Ambassadors with a mission to explain religious literacy.

Join in!

LAPIDO MEDIA'S new Social Media Manager Sam Hailes invites media-savvy followers to join the growing debate about ill-informed religious content in world affairs coverage. Connect with us on Facebook and Twitter; 'like' our page www.facebook.com/lapidomedia; and follow us at twitter.com/lapidomedia. 'As well as sharing our own stories, this offers you the chance to demand more religiously literate news gathering, and to make your views known to journalists, editors and commentators who follow us, mediating what is still a stifled debate' says Sam.

Indy's Assistant Editor challenges media on religious literacy

'RELIGION IS a big story...And yet ITV has scaled back its religious programming from 104 hours in 2004, when it was under an obligation by the regulator Ofcom to cover the subject, to two hours in 2012, when it was not. Britain's biggest commercial broadcaster believes there is no money in the genre. Other channels take a similar view. Aaqil Ahmed, the BBC's head of religion and ethics, is the only commissioning executive in British television with distinct responsibility in this area. At a time when religious disputes appear to be tearing much of the world apart, this leaves the audience deprived of information they need if they are to understand global politics and the cultures of their neighbours.... Current affairs is inevitably drawn to radicalism and 80 per cent of programme-makers told the Edinburgh television festival that extremist subject matter in religious content draws better ratings. We need to hear those extreme voices, such as the Islamic State's odious Awlaki, to appreciate the danger they represent. But British television's treatment of religion needs to go beyond the dangerous and the bizarre – to teach the audience about the contemporary world as well as the past.' - Ian Burrell, Assistant Editor and Media Editor of the Independent. Read the full story at <http://ind.pn/1woy1YC>



THE INDEPENDENT'S IAN BURRELL.

Making sense of religious violence: your invitation

THE JOINT Lapido Media and Open University 'Religious Illiteracy in a Time of Global Uncertainty' Consultation will be held on 6 January 2015 at a venue to be confirmed in Whitehall. Panellists confirmed include British author and historian Michael Burleigh, classicist Tom Holland and Professor of Sociology at the University of Exeter Grace Davie. We will consult on the

failure of secularism, and co-host Professor of Religious History at the Open University John Wolffe will launch the results of the Global Uncertainties Programme (GUP) exercise to understand religion's links with violence. There will also be an AV presentation on the impact of misreporting religion in conflict zones. For an invitation contact Taj Bhilku by post at Curriculum Management Office, Faculty of Arts,

The Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA, or by email to JohnWolffe_PA@open.ac.uk.



The Open University

FIND US ON:   

LAPIDOMEDIA

Centre for Religious Literacy in World Affairs

Writer: Sam Hailes
Design: Adept www.adeptdesign.co.uk

Lapido Media
CAN Mezzanine, 49-51 East Road, London N1 6AH

Tel: +44 (0) 207 250 8366

info@lapidomedia.com

www.lapidomedia.com

Charity Registration Number: 1121301