



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Sadiq Khan
Mayor of London
City Hall
The Queen's Walk
London SE1 2AA

21st June 2017

Dear Sadiq,

I am writing to express my deep concern at activities which occurred at the Al Quds demonstration in London on Sunday, 18th June.

I am aware that, prior to the event, you raised the concerns that have been brought to you with the Met Commissioner.

As you will no doubt have been informed, a number of demonstrators were carrying Hezbollah flags.

Hezbollah is not only deeply anti-Semitic – its Secretary General having previously declared: *"If all Jews gather in Israel, it will save us the trouble of going after them worldwide"*, while Robert Wistrich devotes a chapter of his history of anti-Semitism, *A Lethal Obsession*, to Hezbollah. Its 'military wing' is proscribed under the Terrorism Act 2000.

Under Section 13 of that Act: *"A person in a public place commits an offence if he wears an item of clothing, or wears, carries or displays an article, in such a way or in such circumstances as to arouse reasonable suspicion that he is a member or supporter of a proscribed organisation"*.

According to media reports, the Metropolitan Police Service, have taken the view that those carrying the flags were supporting Hezbollah's 'political wing' which is not proscribed. Indeed, I have been told that some demonstrators attached stickers to their flags to exploit this totally artificial distinction. Hezbollah's Deputy Secretary General, Naim Qassem, himself stated in 2009 that the *"same leadership that directs the parliamentary and government work also leads jihad actions in the struggle against Israel"*. In 2012, he further stated: *"We don't have a military wing and a political one; we don't have Hezbollah on one hand and the resistance party on the other."*

In addition, it appears that the organisers of the march, the Islamic Human Rights Commission, actually encouraged participants to bring Hezbollah flags, again exploiting a distinction which Hezbollah itself does not recognise.



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

I am also disturbed to read of the nature of some of the speeches which were delivered. In particular, the following:

"This demonstration calls on justice for Grenfell.

"Some of the biggest supporters of the Conservative Party are Zionists.

"They are responsible for the murder of the people in Grenfell.

"The Zionist supporters of the Tory Party. Free, Free, Palestine!"

I am concerned that, following last week's tragic events, such language – aside from being wholly untrue – is designed to incite hatred against the Jewish community in London and may well constitute the offence of using abusive or insulting words likely to stir up racial hatred, contrary to section 18 of the Public Order Act.

I am a strong supporter of free speech and the right to demonstrate. However, these rights do not extend to giving support and sustenance to terrorist organisations, nor to incitement to hatred.

For flags of a terrorist organisation to be openly flying in the streets of central London barely two weeks after the terrible events at London Bridge, and following those in Manchester, Westminster Bridge and subsequently at Finsbury Park, is simply unacceptable.

We all applaud the tremendous efforts you have made over the past year to encourage inter-faith cohesion and dialogue and to bring together the many diverse communities from which London derives such strength.

I would appreciate it if you would ask the Met to urgently review its policing of this event. In particular, its decision to allow a march, as opposed to a static demonstration; its interpretation of Section 13 of the Terrorism Act; and whether offences constituting hate speech were committed by any speakers at the event.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Louise Ellman MP
Vice Chair, Labour Friends of Israel