

Press Release

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SECRETARY GENERAL OF MCB SECURES QUESTION TIME APOLOGY AND £45,000 LIBEL DAMAGES FROM THE BBC

The BBC has today apologised in the High Court to Dr Muhammad Abdul Bari, the Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Britain. The BBC has also agreed to pay Dr Bari £45,000 in libel damages (which Dr Bari is donating to charity) together with his legal costs.

Dr Bari's solicitor, Carter-Ruck partner Adam Tudor, explained to the Court that Dr Bari had made his libel complaint following the broadcast of the flagship programme Question Time on 12 March 2009. During the broadcast, the panel was asked about the controversial protests in March against British troops who were parading in Luton on their return from duty in Iraq.

During the discussion that followed, one of the Question Time panellists suggested that despite having been asked many times to condemn the kidnapping and killing of British soldiers, the leadership of the MCB had failed to do so. As the BBC has now accepted, these statements would have been understood by viewers to suggest that the MCB and Dr Bari in fact condoned such atrocities. The panellist further suggested that the MCB leadership believed the kidnapping and killing of British soldiers to be a good and Islamic thing.

The BBC has today confirmed to Mr Justice Eady that these allegations were untrue and that Dr Bari certainly does not condone such atrocities, nor does he believe that it is a good or Islamic thing to carry out such attacks.

Speaking today, Dr Bari said:

"As the MCB and I had made clear even before the Question Time broadcast, we do not support attacks on British soldiers anywhere in the world. We are deeply saddened by the senseless loss of lives both amongst UK soldiers and the many thousands of civilians in both Iraq and Afghanistan. We are therefore pleased that the BBC has today set the record straight."

A link to the statement in open Court has also been published on the BBC's website at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/question_time/8153401.stm.

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