



10<sup>th</sup> August 2022

A chairde,

The last few days have been incredibly difficult for me and for the Irish Muslim Council.

On Bank Holiday, 3rd of August, I received an email that contained a letter by an individual who volunteered with me for the past 13 months in the Irish Muslim Council.

In this letter I was accused of homophobia. This came as a shock to me because the basis on which the accusation was made, was a speech I delivered more than three months ago in the Islamic Centre of Ireland.

It was noticeable that this letter was written in a particular way to serve another purpose and not a genuine attempt to share grievances. It wasn't how a Muslim would write to their Imam expressing their grievances. The letter did not start with the usual greeting of "Assalamu Alaikum". It seemed a politically motivated letter.

I called a meeting of the IMC Board and we discussed this letter in the meeting. There were other concerns also raised by the board members how our relationship with certain politicians, media and other community organisations had been affected negatively during the time this individual volunteered at the Irish Muslim Council. The Board of IMC disagreed that the speech delivered by me was homophobic. They felt that it was a much-needed clarification to the Irish Muslim community.

I still questioned myself and asked my non-Muslim friends and contacts what they made of it. Did they think the speech was homophobic. I even asked two Muslims from the LGBTQI community. I sent them all the full video. Nobody believed that the speech was homophobic, and they all agreed that it was an example of balancing religious freedom with LGBTQI rights. It was not a written speech that was carefully drafted to minimise the possibility of manipulation. I admit that the words could certainly have been better rephrased.

I was still being blackmailed that if I do not do as these individual wants, I will have to be prepared for being cancelled and for immense damage to the Muslim community. This individual wanted me to appoint him as a replacement of myself at an event as a speaker which takes place soon.



I informed him that he could not speak on behalf of IMC but certainly could on behalf of the Irish Muslim community because he clearly identifies himself as an Irish Muslim.

The next day I emailed the organisers of the event requesting if this individual could replace me as a speaker representing the Irish Muslim Community, but they responded that they want me to speak and not anyone else.

I communicated this to the individual and it was a few hours later that he decided to tweet an edited video of myself and accusing me publicly of homophobia. It now became clear that this individual wanted to use this opportunity to kickstart their own political ambitions.

As a faith leader I have always committed myself to social justice and inclusion at every level. Although sexual relations with the same gender are prohibited and classified as Haram in Islam, there is absolutely no justification for discrimination and marginalising of those who identify themselves as LGBTQI.

As a Muslim faith leader, I am aware of the genuine struggle that some Muslims have in terms of their sexuality and how there is a need to provide them with support with the challenges they are facing. They are on one hand attracted to people of the same gender and on the other hand still identify themselves as Muslim and observe Islamic teachings.

This support will not come if we do not have sincere dialogue between faith communities and LGBTQI groups. It requires a safe space where both communities are willing to listen to each other and see how they can keep their own identities and lifestyles and yet support each other.

Many years ago, I came across two young gay Muslims and their struggle with their sexuality and faith which inspired me to reach out to members of the Irish LGBTQI community and assure them that that Mosque and Islamic Centre is a welcoming place for everyone including those who identify themselves as LGBTQI. I invited them at our Community Iftar dinner in Ramadan.

When this year two gay men were killed by someone who identifies himself as a Muslim, I stood with the LGBTQI community against violence and murder of two gay men. Nobody deserves to be treated differently let alone be killed for who they are.



Some people within the Muslim community started a campaign to accuse me of promoting the LGBTQI agenda within Muslims. This was affecting not only my credibility within the Muslim community as a faith leader but also the impact of any future projects on grassroots level for inclusion by the Irish Muslim Council.

To clarify my position as a faith leader, I delivered a speech to my congregation. It breaks my heart that someone who I trusted since the past year they started volunteering for the Irish Muslim Council, decided to upload an edited version of that speech on twitter, more than three months after it was delivered, with the intention of damaging my reputation and the reputation of the Irish Muslim Council.

But while doing so they were doing something more destructive and damaging. They undermined all the work done by engaging two minority communities who are different to each other but have so much more in common. The work that yet needs to be done by having sincere dialogue and trying to find solutions for those that identify themselves as LGBTQI and Muslim at the same time.

This attempt is not an attack on me personally or the Irish Muslim Council but also an attack on all those Muslims that are genuinely struggling with their sexuality.

I want to reinforce that the Irish Muslim Council and the Islamic Centre of Ireland remain places where everyone is welcome irrespective of their faith, race, gender, sexuality etc. If any member of the LGBTQI community still feels that they are hurt after watching the video, let me assure you that I regret that you feel this way. I am willing to sit down and listen to your concerns and work with you to ensure our country remains an inclusive place for all of us.

Ní neart go cur le chéile.

Is mise le meas,  
Shaykh Dr. Umar Al-Qadri  
Chairperson, Irish Muslim Council  
Chief Imam, Islamic Centre of Ireland