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Campaign Against Criminalising Communities (CAMPACC), [www.campacc.org.uk](http://www.campacc.org.uk/)

**Communities together oppose MI5 blackmail and revocation of UK citizenship**

On 18 January a public meeting opposed MI5’s widespread practice of blackmail. MI5 has beenpressurising people under various threats so that they become informers on political views of Muslim and migrant communities. The meeting focused especially on the case of the former Camden resident Mahdi Hashi, whose UK citizenship was revoked last year as punishment for refusing to become an informer.[[1]](#endnote-1)

Held at Camden Town Hall, the meeting was entitled “Stop MI5 blackmail! Protect UK citizenship from attack!” Despite heavy snow, the Council Chamber was filled to capacity with a hundred people, especially from Camden’s Somali community. Organised by the Campaign Against Criminalising Communities (CAMPACC), it was co-sponsored by numerous groups.[[2]](#endnote-2) The Secretary of UNISON’s Camden branch, George Binette, reminded everyone that MI5 is no friend of ordinary people: it had played a central role in undermining the 1984-85 miners’ strike, for example.

Speakers from the Somali, Kurdish and Tamil communities condemned MI5’s blackmail efforts, along with government policy which supports these activities and stigmatizes entire communities as ‘terror suspects’. In particular (for longer quotes, see Note 3)[[3]](#endnote-3):

‘Mahdi Hashi’s treatment is an example of a twisted, failed system perpetuated with impunity by our government, which doesn't care for its minorities and targets them relentlessly.’
 – *Sharhabeel Lone, Director, KTCO*

‘It is outrageous that Mahdi has been persecuted; his only crime was to be outside the UK.’
– *Camden Councillor Awale Olad*

‘Legal protection is difficult when the decision is based on secret evidence; this is used as a cover for incompetence and corruption.’ – *Saghir Hussain, Director, Cageprisoners*

‘I doubt this will end with Muslims. We are the excuse – the guinea pigs for the expansion of state powers.’ *– Mohamed Nur, community worker, KTCO and friend of Mahdi*

‘Such blackmail intimidates people, thus creating fear and deterring people from what they stand for. Our necessary response is unity – regardless of our differences in race, ethnicity and religion.’
– *Can Samet Atas, Kurdish Federation UK*

‘Secret chambers passing judgement on individuals and imposing penal consequences as serious as removal of citizenship is worrying – not only for Tamils but for all free-thinking people of this country. Mahdi Hashi and the Somali community are not alone.’
– *Sasi Maheswaran, Tamil Coordinating Committee UK*

Speakers proposed that everyone work together to oppose the widespread state practices stigmatizing and persecuting migrant communities. Les Levidow of CAMPACC gave an overview of the problem: Muslims and entire migrant nationalities have been treated as ‘suspect communities’ because they generally dissent from UK foreign policy. ‘To stop MI5 blackmail, therefore, we need to oppose the state’s entire “anti-terror” framework.’ After the main speeches, the discussion was joined by veteran civil liberties lawyer Gareth Peirce and the Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation, David Anderson QC.

ENDS

**NOTES**

1. **Mahdi Hashi case**: In October 2012 the Home Secretary withdrew the citizenship of a Somali-born UK citizen, Mahdi Hashi.  As a care worker in the Kentish Town Community Organisation (KTCO) in 2009, Mahdi had refused to become an MI5 informer. Then MI5 threatened him and four colleagues with being labelled as 'Islamic extremists' if they refused to become informers.  Madhi in particular felt so harassed by MI5 that he left the country for Somalia, where he has family members. The Home Secretary later revoked his citizenship, thus preventing his return. After leaving Somalia he disappeared and was held at a secret detention site in Djibouti.  In December it became public that he was rendered to face 'terrorism' charges in a NY court.  There he is accused of participation in *al Shabaab*. For details, see <http://www.camdennewjournal.com/news/2012/dec/fathers-anger-family-are-told-former-camden-schoolboy-being-held-us-terror-charges>

For the 1999 background to these developments, see

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/exclusive-how-mi5-blackmails-british-muslims-1688618.html>,

<http://campacc.org.uk/index.php?mact=News,cntnt01,detail,0&cntnt01articleid=47&cntnt01returnid=133>

  [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. **Sponsorship:** The meeting was sponsored by: the Campaign Against Criminalising Communities (CAMPACC), CagePrisoners, Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers, Islamic Human Rights Commission (IHRC), Kurdish Federation UK, London Somali Youth Forum, Hands Off Somalia, Somali Unity Council, Camden Green Party, Tamil Coordinating Committee (TCC) UK, and Mumia Abu Jamal Defence Campaign (UK). Also supported by Camden Councillors Sarah Hayward (Leader of Camden Council) and Maya de Souza (Green Party). [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. **Quotes from speakers**

*Sharhabeel Lone, Director, KTCO*

“Mahdi Hashi’s treatment is an example of a twisted, failed system perpetuated with impunity by our government, which doesn't care for its minorities and targets them relentlessly, without any care for the heavy, self-destructive consequences that our society bears and will continue to bear. The rendering of Mahdi Hashi has taken an exponential turn in what can only be described as a disgraceful, racist and ill thought-through policy.”

*Mohammed Hashi, father of Mahdi:*

 “I can’t believe the British government could do all this to my son. I saw and read about Guantanamo and the part the UK government played in that, but I thought this was the Bush/Blair administration. Never would I have thought the same treatment would occur under Obama & Cameron’s leadership.”

*Sasi Maheswaran, activist, Tamil Coordinating Committee UK*

“Secret chambers passing judgement on individuals and imposing penal consequences as serious as removal of citizenship is worrying – not only for Tamils, but for all free-thinking people of this country. Mahdi Hashi and the Somali community are not alone.”

*Mohamed Nur, community worker, KTCO and friend of Mahdi*

"I doubt this will end with Muslims. We are the excuse – the guinea pigs for the expansion of state powers."

*Can Samet Atas, Kurdish Federation UK*

Security agencies have approached many Kurds – not just in the UK, but all across Europe – to blackmail them to give information on the community's political views and activities.  Kurds being targeted include teenagers as young as 15 and adults of all ages, in particular those who play an important role within the community. Their houses have been raided and families disturbed after refusing to give information to MI5. Such blackmail intimidates people, thus creating fear and deterring people from what they stand for. Our necessary response is unity – regardless of our differences in race, ethnicity and religion.

*Saghir Hussain, Director, Cageprisoners*

When we tried to expose MI5 blackmail of British Somalis in 2009, we thought that these activities were operating at the lower end of the food chain. But last year we realized that they worked higher up the food chain when the Home Office revoked Mahdi Hashi’s citizenship. We have appealed that decision to the High Court, but courts have little power in such cases. Legal protection is difficult when the decision is based on secret evidence; this is used as a cover for incompetence and corruption.

*Kat Craig, Vice-Chair id Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers*

MI5 blackmail is illegal and immoral, yet it continues with impunity. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)