

# Ofcom Broadcast and On Demand Bulletin

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## Finality of Prophethood

**Type of case** Broadcast Standards

**Outcome** In Breach

**Service** Iqra TV

**Date & time** 7 September 2019, 11:20 to 22:54

**Category** Abusive treatment  
Generally accepted standards

**Summary** Statements made in a programme amounted to derogatory and abusive treatment of Ahmadi people, which was not justified by the context. In breach of Rules 3.3 and 2.3 of the Broadcasting Code.

### Introduction

*Iqra TV* is a general entertainment channel broadcasting a range of religious content aimed at the Muslim community in the UK. The licence for this service is held by Channel I (UK) Limited (“Channel I” or “the Licensee”).

Ofcom received two complaints that the language used in the above programme was inflammatory towards the Ahmadiyya community and its beliefs.

The Ahmadiyya movement identifies itself as a Muslim movement which follows the teachings of the Qur’an. However, it is regarded as heretical by some Muslims due to its interpretation of the concept of finality of prophethood. Islamic opinion holds that there will be no prophets after the Prophet Muhammad, a concept described as *Khatme Nabuwat* or the finality of prophethood. The Ahmadiyya community believe that, while there will be no law-giving prophets after Muhammad, “non-legislating” prophets can come from within Islam as reformers and with the sole purpose of reviving Islam<sup>1</sup>. There are Ahmadiyya communities around the world. Ahmadiyya communities face

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<sup>1</sup> See: “[Ahmadis](#)”, Oxford Islamic Studies Online.

restrictions in many Muslim countries and there have been reports of persecution and discrimination including in Pakistan<sup>2</sup> and in the UK<sup>3</sup>.

*Finality of Prophethood* was broadcast on 7 September 2019 to commemorate the 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the passing by the Pakistan National Assembly of the Second Amendment to the Constitution of Pakistan on 7 September 1974 (“the Amendment”), which declared Ahmadi people to be non-Muslim<sup>4</sup>. The programme was an all-day conference in both English and Urdu which lasted approximately 12 hours. In the quotes given below, the language used was English except where otherwise stated. We provided an English translation of the Urdu and Arabic content to the Licensee and gave it an opportunity to comment on its accuracy. The Licensee disagreed with our translation of “zulm” and we used the alternative translation that it proposed<sup>5</sup>. It also disagreed with our footnoted explanations of words which we did not translate into English. We have set out its alternative understanding of these words in our summary of its representations. The Licensee did not raise any other issues with the translation, and we therefore relied on it for the purposes of our investigation. Due to the length of the programme, we have included in square brackets information on the times of day when the quoted statements below were made, for ease of reference.

At its start, the founder of Iqra TV and Al-Khair Foundation, Imam Qasim Rashid Ahmad, introduced the conference and informed viewers of the programme’s schedule. He explained that the first part of the Finality of Prophethood conference would include Na’ats<sup>6</sup> and lectures praising the Prophet Muhammad. He added that the programme would later feature a discussion about the Amendment and lectures on the finality of prophethood. Ofcom obtained recordings of the first hour and a half of the programme, which raised no issues under the Broadcasting Code, and of all the content in the second part of the programme, beginning at 15:00. It was within this latter part of the programme, which lasted just under eight hours that references were made to Ahmadi people and their beliefs.

The programme began with a series of Na’ats, Qur’anic recitations and lectures focused on praising the Prophet Muhammad. The lectures discussed various topics relating to the Prophet Muhammad, including the prophet’s life and teachings. In the second part of the programme, Toaha Qureshi<sup>7</sup> (or “the presenter”) interviewed the author and writer Samiullah Malik<sup>8</sup>. The interview lasted approximately four hours and took the perspective that there are no prophets of any kind after

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<sup>2</sup> For example: [“Pakistan's Ahmadi community faces growing discrimination, report says”](#), Reuters, 6 May 2019.

<sup>3</sup> For example: [“Ahmadi mosques on guard over death threats from Muslims”](#), The Times, 26 November 2017.

<sup>4</sup> The Constitution of Pakistan, Constitution (Second Amendment) Act 1974.

<sup>5</sup> See footnote 29.

<sup>6</sup> Poetry usually in praise of Prophet Muhammad but can also be about other Islamic subjects.

<sup>7</sup> Toaha Qureshi is Chairman of Stockwell Green Community Services and Forum for International Relations Development (FIRD), a UK based think tank.

<sup>8</sup> Samiullah Malik is an author and editor of online Urdu news outlet, Bitter Truth. He is also a regular writer for the Pakistani newspapers, Daily Ausaf and Jasarat.

Muhammad. It covered a range of topics, including, for example: the historical background to the Amendment, the finality of prophethood and an analysis of Ahmadi beliefs and scriptures.

The presenter recited a prayer in Arabic and then introduced the interview:

[15:09] *“My dear viewers, at Iqra today on 7 of September 2019, we are holding a Khatme Nabuwat conference in the commemoration of 7 September 1974, when one of the greatest issue, one of the most important issue faced by the entire Muslim Ummah<sup>9</sup> in the last century was, with regards to the aqidah<sup>10</sup> Khatme Nabuwat, the belief of finality of prophethood, it was sent to the Parliament of Pakistan. There was a Bill presented...they defended the belief of finality of prophethood and they made it absolutely clear that there is no compromise on the belief of finality of prophethood...And what were the reasons, why the Ahmadiyya fold, the Ahmadiyya group or the cult, some people call it...In a way, this was a group which was created for a specific reason, why this group was declared as non-Muslim minority by the entire Parliament of Pakistan on 7 September...”.*

The presenter asked Samiullah Malik why he considered it was so important to commemorate the Amendment on 7 September 1974. Samiullah Malik replied:

[15:13] *“...this is the day that we realised the finality of prophet [in Arabic, ‘peace be upon him’] duty. Because, there is only one fitnah<sup>11</sup>, called Qadiani<sup>12</sup>, it’s only in Pakistan. Because it’s grown up from Qadian<sup>13</sup> then transferred in Pakistan. The background of this fitnah actually, because in 1857, when the British sarkar<sup>14</sup>, the British Government actually, they ruled the subcontinent actually at that time.*

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<sup>9</sup> An Arabic Islamic phrase meaning the “Muslim community”.

<sup>10</sup> An Arabic Islamic term meaning “creed” or “belief”.

<sup>11</sup> The [Oxford Islamic Studies Online definition of “fitnah”](#) is: “Trial or testing, temptation; by extension, treachery, persecution, seduction, enchantment, or disorder resulting from these things. A hadith states that the greatest fitnah for men is women. Though the term fitnah is generally negative, a girl may be named Fatin or Fitnah in the hope she will not be a seductress and in recognition of her beauty. In modern political terminology, allegation of fitnah can be used to discredit the actions of opponents. The first Muslims to write about the French revolution (1789) identified it as fitnah”.

<sup>12</sup> The term Qadiani is used by some to refer to Ahmadi people, but is regarded as pejorative by that community. The Licensee’s representations summarised below comment on this issue, which we consider in this Decision.

<sup>13</sup> Qadian is a town in Punjab, India. It is the birthplace of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the founder of the Ahmadiyya movement.

<sup>14</sup> An Urdu word meaning “authority”.

*In 1857 actually there was a very big problem between the Hindu and the Sikhs and Muslims...”.*

Samiullah Malik added that “mostly the British...killed a lot of Muslim scholars” because of their support of jihad<sup>15</sup>. The presenter asked his guest to bring the discussion back to the significance of the 7 September 1974. Samiullah Malik explained that Pakistan was created in the name of Islam under the slogan “*La illaha ila Allah, Muhammadur Rassullah*”<sup>16</sup> and that Muhammad was the final prophet. He said that “an attack” on this “base” was a “very big issue” and also an attack on the Qur’an, the hadith<sup>17</sup> and the whole belief on which Pakistan was created. The presenter and guest then went on to discuss the history and formation of the Ahmadiyya movement and the background to the Amendment. This included criticism of the actions of the first foreign minister of Pakistan, Sir Muhammad Zafrulla Khan, who was an Ahmadi, and of the alleged intentions of the Ahmadiyya movement to acquire Kashmir.

Samiullah Malik then said:

[15:18] *“I would like to tell you viewers what really the Qadiani, I mean the fitnah, what he mentioned actually, Ghulam Qadiani<sup>18</sup>, in his book. Then let you viewers decide why I call it fitnah”.*

The presenter then explained that he had several physical copies of Ahmadi scriptures with him as reference material and held up the Tadhkirah<sup>19</sup> as an example. Samiullah Malik said “[in Arabic] *I seek forgiveness from Allah*” and stated that he would use the books of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad<sup>20</sup> as a reference for his explanations. The presenter criticised the title of the Tadhkirah and said in Urdu “*There is no equivalent book to the Qur’an but they [i.e. the Ahmadi community] have named this [book] as Exposition, which means the sacred revelation*”. He explained that the majority of Ahmadi scriptures were only available in Urdu and therefore some of their discussions would be in Urdu. He then asked Samiullah Malik to continue his explanation of Ahmadi beliefs. Samiullah Malik then said “[in Urdu] *when the English government of India couldn’t cool down the Muslims’ passion for jihad...In order to conduct abrasive attacks on Islam, they choose Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Qadiani [who] introduced himself as the last prophet so as to bring about a major alteration in their religion [i.e. Islam], Allah forbid*”. The presenter asked Mr Malik to put history aside and focus on “*what beliefs of*

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<sup>15</sup> Jihad means holy war or struggle.

<sup>16</sup> An Arabic Islamic phrase which literally means “There is no God but Allah, Muhammad is his messenger”.

<sup>17</sup> Report of the words and deeds of Muhammad and other early Muslims; considered an authoritative source of revelation, second only to the Qur’an (sometimes referred to as sayings of the Prophet). Hadith (pl. ahadith; hadith is used as a singular or a collective term in English) were collected, transmitted, and taught orally for two centuries after Muhammad’s death and then began to be collected in written form and codified. See [Hadith, Oxford Islamic Studies Online](#).

<sup>18</sup> A reference to the founder of the Ahmadiyya movement, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad.

<sup>19</sup> Tadhkirah is a collection of revelations by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad.

<sup>20</sup> Mirza Ghulam Ahmad: founder of the Ahmadiyya movement.

*the Qadianis were exposed to the Parliament that made the entire [Pakistani] Parliament, unanimously, declare the Qadianis, they call themselves Ahmadis, a minority". This was followed by a discussion of various Ahmadi scriptures between the presenter and Samiullah Malik. During this discussion, Mr Malik quoted sections of books written by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad in which he praised Queen Victoria, sought her favour for Ahmadiyya society and stated it was only her "imperial era" that "suit[ed] the advent of the Promised Messiah".*

The presenter then explained the events which led to the Amendment in 1974:

*[15:36] "This is a day of commemoration for the 7 September 1974, when the entire Parliament of Pakistan unanimously declared the Ahmadiyya group as non-Muslims, minority in Pakistan. This was debated in the entire Parliament, which was declared as a special committee to discuss this matter. It was debated for more than 13 [days] where the Qadiani and Lahori group, both of them, they presented their case in front of the Parliament in the presence of the speaker of the National Assembly. Five days the Qadiani group and then the Lahori group also presented their case. Viewers, I must inform you that the Ahmadiyya group has been, actually, very much fractured. It has now more than 10 groups. Like Qadiani, Lahori, [Ahmadis] were immediately split into two groups the Ahmadiyya was, and now there are many other groups [and their details] are available on internet".*

The presenter said that Mr Malik was an expert on finality of prophethood and had written books on whether the "Ahmadi group" was a "threat" to Pakistan's national security. He said that they would discuss why "the entire [mainly secular] National Assembly declared the Ahmadiyya as non-Muslim minority group". The guest then returned to their earlier discussion regarding Ahmadi beliefs. The presenter explained that, like the proceedings which led to the Amendment, this discussion was entirely based on references from Ahmadi scriptures:

*[15:41] "[Holding up a physical book from the Roohani Khazain<sup>21</sup> and pointing to additional volumes which were on a table beside the presenter and Mr Malik] This set contains 23 books, so they are all here. Whatever we are talking, we are talking with reference. We will be giving the page number and the book's name and as I said to you earlier on, [Holding up a copy of the Tadhkirah] this is a book called Tadhkirah. Tadhkirah, this is the book called Tadhkirah, which is the equivalent of Qur'an [in Arabic, 'I seek refuge in Allah'] for the Ahmadiyya group<sup>22</sup>. It*

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<sup>21</sup> The Roohani Khazain is a collection of 23 volumes of Ahmadi scriptures by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, compiled after his death.

<sup>22</sup> In an [introduction to the Tadhkirah](#), as published on the website of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, it is said that the Tadhkirah is "a collection of both the direct verbal revelations and dreams and visions received by the Promised Messiah [Mirza Ghulam Ahmad]" and that they are all "within the context of the Holy Qur'an" and "neither add anything to the teachings of Islam nor take anything away from them".

*is not just, we are talking about it, we are plucking it from the air, it is all referenced”.*

The following exchange then took place between the presenter and guest:

[15:42]

Samiullah Malik: *“...Muhammad and Ahmad<sup>23</sup> [in Arabic, ‘peace be upon him’] as our prophet we are Ahmadi, they are Qadiani actually. I think we must, from now onwards, call them Qadiani...they want to call [themselves] Ahmadiyya...if you keep your name Samiullah or Toaha Qureshi, anyone actually, it doesn’t mean that you’re a Muslim unless you believe all of our faith. And now if you ask me about the faith of Ahmadiyya, it’s Qadiani. Myself actually, I will always call them Qadiani. This is the reason, particularly, I’m telling you because a lot of your viewers will hear that always I am calling them Qadiani [and ask] ‘Why does he call them Qadiani?’”.*

The presenter: *“As a matter of fact, I support your idea. I’m going to give you a reference now...It’s quite important, that on page 76 in this book Tadhkirah [Holding up the open book to viewers], Mirza Sahab<sup>24</sup>...he says [in Urdu] ‘Yes, it is a fact that the name of Qadian is written in the Noble Qur’an. Yes, it is a fact that the name of Qadian is written in the Noble Qur’an. And I said: “The names of three cities are mentioned with honours in the Noble Qur’an: Mecca, Medina and Qadian”’. [Reverting to English] Here it is. Here it is for the reference of our viewers and the audience sitting here. This is the reference that Qadian is so sacred a city that they call it Little Hajj<sup>25</sup> they call it. Forget Mecca now, come to Qadian. [In Urdu] Milk has dried in Mecca’s bosom. Come to Qadian now. [Reverting to English] So, when they claim superiority of Qadian over Mecca, [in Arabic, ‘God forbid’], then, if people call them Qadiani. They used to be very proud of being called Qadianis. Now they are running away from the word Qadiani and they are calling themselves Ahmadiyya, for a reason. Because people know what Qadianism is, people know what Qadianis are, what their beliefs are. So, it’s just kind of running away from their reality and calling themselves Ahmadiyya”.*

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<sup>23</sup> In some Islamic traditions, Ahmad is another name given to the Prophet Muhammad.

<sup>24</sup> Mirza Sahib is an abbreviated version of the name of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (founder of Ahmadiyya movement).

<sup>25</sup> Hajj is an annual Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca, a sacred city for Muslims.

Samiullah Malik then went on to discuss what he described in Urdu as “heretical statements” found within Ahmadi scriptures, which he said “Qadiani friends” had been “kept from knowing”. The presenter interrupted the guest and said:

[15:46] *“...I would like to make one announcement for our Qadiani community particularly. This programme, these conferences<sup>26</sup> are not anti-Qadiani”.*

Samiullah Malik said “exactly”, and the presenter continued:

*“These are pro-Khatme Nabuwwat programmes. These programmes are...only there to promote the belief of finality of prophethood and to create awareness on the belief of finality of prophethood. [In Urdu] Our aim is to inform people about the belief in the end of prophethood. It’s not about opposing the Qadianis or Qadianism but when we speak about the belief in the end of prophethood, we are bound to talk about those who claimed to be prophets after Prophet Muhammad”.*

The guest then resumed his point that there was heresy within Ahmadi scriptures. While reading from various Ahmadi texts, Samiullah Malik said that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad had claimed to be God, “*the Prophet Muhammad in image*” and to have performed more signs than the Prophet Muhammad. The presenter and guest discussed the claims Mirza Ghulam Ahmad had made about several Islamic prophets, which they treated as sacrilegious and for which they sought “*Allah’s forgiveness*”. These included claims about Jesus Christ. Mr Malik questioned, therefore, why the British Raj had supported Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (“*did they prop him up for this purpose? It was for some other purpose*”). The presenter said that Mirza Ahmad “*even claimed to be every prophet, he claimed he was Krishna as well as God, he was Mahdi<sup>27</sup> and Messiah too*”. Samiullah Malik said that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad believed that visiting Qadian was more valuable than the Islamic pilgrimage Hajj. The presenter and guest then resumed talking about their usage of the word “Qadiani”. Speaking in Urdu, they made the following statements:

[16:03]

The presenter: *“When we say we are of Pakistani heritage; we are British; we are proud of it, we are Pakistani, we are proud of it, we are Muslim, we are proud of it, if someone says to us: ‘I belong to Multan, we are*

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<sup>26</sup> The programme was described as a conference, but it also referenced other non-televised conferences that were taking place around the country to commemorate 7 September 1974.

<sup>27</sup> According to some Islamic traditions, Mahdi (otherwise known as Iman Mahdi) is an Islamic leader who will arrive alongside Jesus to defeat Dajjal. The [Oxford Islamic Studies Online definition of “Mahdi”](#) is: “Divinely guided one. An eschatological figure who Muslims believe will usher in an era of justice and true belief just prior to the end of time; an honorific applied to Muhammad and the first four caliphs by the earliest Muslims. Not mentioned in the Quran. The concept was developed by the Shiis and some Sunnis into that of a messianic deliverer who would return to champion their cause...”.

*proud of it', why are they so embarrassed at being called Qadiani that they say: 'Don't call me a Qadiani; it's a derogatory remark'".*

Samiullah Malik: *"Right. You have raised a very good point. Now, look what he [Mirza Ghulam Ahmad] says regarding what you said about their real holy place: 'People go for Hajj as usual and as an extra bonus but coming here to Qadian brings more heavenly rewards than going for Hajj as a bonus'. He writes this in the Mirror of Islamic Miracles, page 352; Volume 5 of the Treasures. Then the Qadianis write in The Toxic Gem, page 52: 'Now the land of Qadian is sacrosanct'. The land of Qadian! And they say: 'Don't call us Qadianis'. But what do they themselves say? 'Now the land of Qadian is sacrosanct. Crowds of people make it a sacred land'. They say it is sacred land. If someone says to me I am a Meccan or a Medinian, it's a matter of pride for me".*

The presenter: *"Absolutely".*

Samiullah Malik: *"As you said, why do they feel nervous calling themselves Qadianis? If you say that it is sacred land, holy land, respectable land, then you should call yourself Qadianis. Rather they should thank us for repeatedly calling them Qadianis. Right?"*

The presenter: *"When you love and cherish a place so much, when you revere it so much...Now we are Qurayshi Hashemite<sup>28</sup> who came from Mecca. It's well established. If someone calls us Meccan, how high we will raise our head in pride, saying to people: 'We originally came from Mecca'?"*

Samiullah Malik: *"Absolutely correct. And now you see, they say we curse and verbally abuse them. When they sit here, they often cry, playing the victim, saying: 'We are called this and that; we are being oppressed'<sup>29</sup>".*

The presenter and guest then discussed Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's denigration of people who didn't support his claim to prophethood, according to their own interpretation of his texts. The presenter said that no prophet or even ordinary man would use such abusive language, calling people *"the*

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<sup>28</sup> Descendants of the Banu Hashim clan of the Quraysh tribe in Mecca, to which the Prophet Muhammad belonged.

<sup>29</sup> *"Zulm"*. In Ofcom's Preliminary View this was translated as "atrocities", as in "atrocities are inflicted on us". The Licensee proposed an alternative translation of "oppression" or "injustice". Ofcom reconsidered the meaning of Zulm. In Ofcom's view, in the particular context, the word meant either "persecution" or "oppression", or derivatives of these words. We therefore used "oppressed" in line with the Licensee's suggested translation.



*offspring of whores, offspring of bitches, calling them Zuriyat-ul-baghaya<sup>30</sup>, they turned into the swine of the wilderness, pigs, and they are cursed a thousand times...". He then asked why "our Ahmadi friends" could not see this. The presenter and guest argued that Ahmadi leaders were deceiving the Ahmadiyya community by editing their scriptures and Mr Malik challenged "Qadiani friends" to consider the matter. The presenter said Mirza Ahmad's claim "'Allah has summoned me, calling me Muhammad and messenger'" was obviously wrong and lamented that the "average Ahmadi, Qadiani" had been "deceive[d]". He added, "I sympathise with the Qadianis regarding how they are being misled". The presenter and guest then discussed in Urdu the revelation of the Qur'an to the Prophet Muhammad. The following discussion then took place in Urdu:*

[16:13]

Samiullah Malik: *"...The entire Qur'an contains the ethics of our Prophet. This is ethics. These things [the quotes earlier in the programme of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's writings] that we have just read, because of necessity and compulsion, we read them in order to inform our Qadiani friends. Otherwise these things aren't worth reading, they aren't even worth touching with a bargepole".*

The presenter: *"But it is necessary. Unfortunately, the Ahmadiyya community cries a lot, portraying victimhood and being oppressed, saying: 'We have been oppressed<sup>31</sup>'. Whoever speaks about the end of prophethood, the Ahmadis say these are extremists and terrorists. The British Government too is in their trap but, praise Allah, we have made the Government, their right offices, understand that it is not like this. The end of prophethood is a faith. Creating awareness of this faith is not a crime anywhere. It is freedom of speech. However, if there is hate speech going on somewhere, it should be stopped. We are against it. If someone is spreading extremism and terrorism, we are with the Government on it, in stopping it. We will walk with you, but you can't stop anyone from creating awareness about the faith in the end of prophethood. If someone will say that my religion is bad or wrong, it is my right to create awareness about it. It is like if someone starts selling trainers in competition with Nike or Adidas original trainers, what will happen? The producers of the original Nike and Adidas trainers will sue them and tell people that they are telling lies, committing fraud and deception, don't at all listen to them. This is called creating awareness".*

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<sup>30</sup> Ofcom understands that the meaning of this phrase is contentious between Ahmadis and non-Ahmadis. Ahmadis say that it translates as "one who rejects the truth", while some critics of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad say that it means "children of adulterers". Both camps cite Arabic lexicons to support their interpretation/translation.

<sup>31</sup> See footnote 29.

Samiullah Malik: *“Let me give you an example”.*

The presenter: *“Let me inform the viewers that, as I mentioned earlier, many dissident groups among Qadianis have grown in numbers. There are too many now. There are approximately more than ten. The main ones are the Qadiani group, their headquarters are in London. There is a Lahori group with headquarters in Lahore. The Lahori group doesn’t believe that Mr Mirza was a prophet. They believe in him as a reformer. Then there is the Green Ahmadiyya. Then there is a group that says that Mirza Masroor’s<sup>32</sup> election to the office of Caliph was an engineered election, he committed fraud and became the Caliph. He had no right to it. He sabotaged the entire system to establish his caliphate. Then there is the Jam’at-a-Ahmadiyya of Muslims”.*

Samiullah Malik: *“Adding to your talk, they also allege he [Mirza Masroor Ahmad] went to prison, ask him why he went to Multan Jail. Why he was sentenced to go to prison? It was a charge of immoral conduct for which he was sent to prison”<sup>33</sup>.*

The presenter: *“It would be part of the record but I am not aware of it at the moment”.*

The presenter and guest then discussed further how, in their view, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad’s claim of prophethood was incompatible with a belief in the finality of prophethood. They referred to the excommunication from the Ahmadiyya community of those who had claimed prophethood after Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. They compared not allowing the Ahmadis to call themselves Muslims or part of Islam to a company protecting its brand name and asked, *“did we call them unbelievers first or were they the first to say it to us?”*. This led to a discussion about the Ahmadiyya community’s alleged self-imposed distance from the Muslim community and comments that its founder had denigrated Muslim people who did not accept him as a prophet. The presenter said that the Ahmadi *“Caliph Mirza Bashir”* had written that anyone who *“accept[ed] Muhammad as a prophet but [didn’t] accept the Promised Messiah Mirza Ghulam Ahmad [was] not only an unbeliever but a staunch unbeliever, and ousted from the ambit of Islam”*. He then said that Ahmadis had separated themselves from the wider Muslim community and that this was a point made by the Attorney General of Pakistan’s National Assembly during the events which led to the Amendment. The presenter said that there would be a break, after which they would discuss Mirza Ghulam Ahmad’s claims of being *“Mahdi and Messiah”*, *“God”*, and *“Krishna”*.

After a series of advertisements, the conference resumed and several Na’ats were sung in Urdu. This lasted approximately half an hour and was followed by another advertisement break. After this break, the interview resumed and the presenter thanked the founder of Iqra TV and Al-Khair Foundation for

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<sup>32</sup> Mirza Masroor Ahmad: Elected fifth Caliph and current Head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community.

<sup>33</sup> Ofcom could find no independent verification of the allegation made by the guest Samiullah Malik that the current Head of the Ahmadiyya Community had been imprisoned for immoral conduct.

providing a platform to commemorate the Amendment. The presenter described the passing of the Amendment by the Pakistan National Assembly. He explained that the Pakistani Government strongly believed that the Ahmadiyya community was running a parallel system in the city of Rabwah and that this was being considered as a national security threat. He asked Samiullah Malik for his opinion on this and Samiullah Malik said that the Ahmadiyya community wanted to establish a “*Qadiani state*”. The presenter and guest then discussed the Ahmadiyya community’s alleged attempts to infiltrate various institutions across Pakistan in order to “*topple the Government*”. They said that evidence was emerging that the Ahmadiyya community sought the separation of East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) from West Pakistan (now Pakistan) to turn it into an Ahmadiyya state. They discussed various Ahmadi individuals who had held positions of power prior to the Amendment whom they believed were trying to influence the Government and “*spread false propoganda*”. Samiullah Malik then alleged that Ahmadis had pretended to believe in the finality of prophethood in order to attain jobs in state institutions and suggested that they were affiliated with the British Government. During this discussion, the presenter and his guest made the following statements in Urdu:

[17:17]

Samiullah Malik: *“With the same tongue, they praise the Britons and with the same tongue they speak such lies. Now, tell me, is there any prophet in any religion who asks his followers to speak untruths, or also makes such claims?”*

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[17:19]

Samiullah Malik: *“... I want to draw the viewers’ attention to a fact that according to Mirza, he was 17 when his father expired and after that he has always been in praise of Britons and always glorified them. Now, a question arises, was Mirza a prophet of the Muslims or the Britons, the way he has admired and praised them...”*

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[17:20]

The presenter: *“I would certainly want to raise one issue, there is a very important point in this, Mr Malik, why is it that the British Government insists on Muslims to accept them as part of the Muslim community. Why is it?”*

Samiullah Malik: *“The reason for this is very simple...The fact is why should Britons support them as these people are their own creation? Qadianis are the plant planted by the Britons”.*

The presenter and guest then went on to discuss in Urdu the reasons why they believed the Ahmadiyya community had gained foreign support. The guest alleged that Britain gave aid to the Ahmadiyya community in order to “*stab the Muslims in the back*”. He said that jihad had defeated

Russia in Afghanistan and brought six Muslim states<sup>34</sup> out of Russia. He added that the US wanted to “tackle Islam” and that it regarded and supported the Ahmadiyya community “as the most organised group against the topic of jihad”. The presenter said that it was his understanding that “jihad is against terrorism” and he and the guest agreed that it was a double standard for the British to justify the Falklands war but “dub” Muslim people who go to fight overseas as pursuing jihad. The guest said that Britain supported the Ahmadiyya community because it was “their own brainchild” and the presenter said in Urdu:

[17:28] *“Well, Mr Malik, they also complain of being persecuted by Pakistani people. [Reverting to English] ‘We are being persecuted by Pakistani people, by Pakistani nation, by Pakistani Government, by mullahs, this and that’... My understanding is that it is not only the Qadiani worship places which were attacked”.*

The presenter then called for a break and said that they would later discuss whether the Ahmadiyya community was really facing persecution or whether the state of Pakistan was simply upholding the law of the land.

After the break, a cleric (“the cleric”) gave a lecture in Urdu. The cleric recited a prayer and then introduced his lecture:

[17:43] *“Today, we are commemorating the history of 7 September when Pakistan’s Assembly had unanimously resolved a longstanding issue. The clerics had already adopted a firm stance on this issue in their assemblies and gatherings. This issue was brought before the Assembly to give it a formal shape. Before that, Rabta Alam-e-Islami [the Muslim World League<sup>35</sup>] had also formally approved of it. Today, we are commemorating the same historic occasion. Now, if someone makes such statements publicly which we term as tantamount to being infidelity, and this is utter apostasy, but we were faced with such an issue which was not open, when something is done behind the scene, we call it dajjal<sup>36</sup>. Dajjal means to mix the right with wrong through lies. If someone makes such statements publicly, it is termed as apostasy. Hence, the issue which Assembly had resolved on this date was not an issue of apostasy, but of dajjal. Because of this, it created a lot of difficulties, and different kinds of misunderstandings, but may Allah Almighty reward the righteous clerics who raised their true voices*

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<sup>34</sup> Ofcom understands this to be a reference to 6 of the 15 Soviet Socialist Republics that made up the USSR from 1922 to 1991 which had a Muslim majority population.

<sup>35</sup> An Islamic non-governmental organisation based in Saudi Arabia.

<sup>36</sup> In Islamic theology, Dajjal, or al-Masīḥ al-Dajjāl in full, is an evil figure impersonating the true Messiah. Dajjal is also used as an adjective to describe something or someone considered deceptive and evil, such as the teaching of a false prophet.

*despite difficulties and cunningness of dajjal. About 80 years before the day which we are commemorating today on which the Assembly passed its resolution, the clerics had firmly determined it as their stand on their own”.*

The cleric then discussed the difference between Islam and apostasy. He said that he was one of four clerics who persuaded the Ummah (i.e. Muslim community) not to remain silent on the issue of the finality of prophethood and described the events which led to the Amendment. He added:

*[17:58] “Now as well, if anyone has any doubts in this regard, the Finality of Prophethood conferences are held throughout the country and they highlight the same viewpoint that Ulema<sup>37</sup> had not adopted a viewpoint blindly or without evidence”.*

After a break, a Na’at was sung and the previous lecture continued. The cleric discussed the finality of prophethood and the importance of the Amendment. He then said:

*[18:08] “When I got the news of the passage of the bill while I was giving a speech at Rajthail, I announced the good news with these words, ‘Congratulations of Muslims, a call has come from Rawalpindi that a righteous assembly has knocked group of dajjal”.*

The cleric closed his lecture by praising Maulana Ghulam Ghous Hazarvi<sup>38</sup>. After the break, a Na’at was sung and then the interview between the presenter and Samiullah Malik resumed. The presenter said:

[18:17]

The presenter: *“We were talking about the issue of victimhood of Qadianis, where they claim that they are being persecuted in Pakistan and Muslim community is persecuting them. And I said, that is documented very well, that this was a wave of extremism and terrorism in Pakistan orchestrated by foreign agencies to destabilise Pakistan politically and economically. Hence, the attacks on Sunni [Sufi] shrines<sup>39</sup>, on*

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<sup>37</sup> A body of Muslim scholars who are recognized as having specialist knowledge of Islamic sacred law and theology.

<sup>38</sup> A Pakistani politician who was a member of the Pakistan National Assembly when the Amendment was introduced.

<sup>39</sup> For example, see [Sufi Shrine Bombing in Pakistan Kills at Least 10](#), The New York Times, 8 May 2019.

*Shia<sup>40</sup> imambargahs<sup>41</sup>, the mosques, the army headquarters<sup>42</sup>, the naval<sup>43</sup>, the air force headquarters<sup>44</sup>, universities, colleges, schools, markets and you name it everywhere there was terrorism carried out. So, my dear viewers, if there were certain attacks on Ahmadiyya worship places or Qadiani worship places that was not something specially designed to persecute Qadianis or Ahmadis. Now we ask the question...why is it that Qadianis are claiming that state is persecuting them...why is it that the British Government is insisting...that we should be considering Ahmadiyyas or Qadianis as part of Muslim community?"*

Samiullah Malik: *"...why the Ahmadiyya or Qadiani are blaming the Pakistani state is prosecuting the Ahmadiyya only. You very clearly mentioned in your beginning comments section that actually the terrorists attack in every single department of Pakistan...More than 38,000 lives are martyred...by terrorists. As the Qadiani live in Pakistan, as a Pakistani, so try to understand this matter actually, there are few powers behind these terrorism attacks...India knows the weak point that actually there are lot of minorities that live in Pakistan, and Qadiani is one of them, according to a new law. And that's why intentionally they choose the Qadiani worship in Lahore, they attack on that one. And especially, you know, when we had an attack on a naval base, a lot of, you mentioned it, the Indian channels they don't publicise that attack. But why the Ahmadiyya, when the terrorists attack an Ahmadiyya place, why all the Indian channels immediately start televising the programme for that one, that is one question.*

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<sup>40</sup> Human Rights Watch holds Sunni extremists responsible for attacks on Shia people in Pakistan. See [Pakistan: Rampant Killings of Shia by Extremists](#), Human Rights Watch, 29 June 2014.

<sup>41</sup> A congregation hall for Shia Muslim commemoration and prayer services.

<sup>42</sup> See for example [Pakistan militants launch deadly attack on Rawalpindi mosque](#), The Guardian, 4 December 2009. This article reports an attack during Friday prayers by the Taliban on a mosque attended by military personnel. It also refers to a previous 22-hour siege of the army headquarters in Rawalpindi in early October that left 23 people dead. It stated that "More than 400 Pakistanis have died since early October [2009] in attacks on UN offices, security installations and crowded bazaars".

<sup>43</sup> See [Militants Attack Pakistani Naval Base in Karachi](#), 22 May 2011, which reports that the Pakistani Taliban claimed responsibility for this attack. See also [Bomber hits Islamabad navy headquarters](#), The Guardian, 2 December 2009, which states: "The blast shatters a lull of several weeks in terrorist attacks on Islamabad and raises fears of another wave of Taliban violence".

<sup>44</sup> See [Pakistan air force base comes under attack](#), The Guardian, 16 August 2012, which stated: "No group has claimed responsibility for the attack but suspicion will likely fall on the Pakistani Taliban".

*Because, after all, when ISI<sup>45</sup>, the intelligence agencies, when they interrogate all these matters, they checked that India is actually behind on that one”.*

The presenter: *“It’s good that you mentioned ISI, the Pakistani spooks, their headquarters have been also attacked”.*

Samiullah Malik: *“That’s what I’m telling you, actually. When the ISI get relevant evidence and the proofs of that one, or who’s behind that one actually, they share with the Qadianis. We wonder why the Qadiani, here in London, even they do not condemn India, we didn’t understand. But they shouted and when there is attack on the Lahore, the Qadiani centre, they shouted and tell all the media that we are attacked in Pakistan. They didn’t say by the Pakistani Government, they say attacked by the mullahs, they try to give the wrong shape actually to this attack”.*

The presenter: *“Actually, Dr Shahid Qureshi of London Post, he has exposed their reasons behind their victimhood approach. He says that categorically that this cult has adopted this victimhood approach because they want to have political asylum, the monetary gains in Europe. What do you say to that?”.*

Samiullah Malik: *“It’s very true. It’s very true, very true. I’ll just mention one more thing actually. After this attack, immediately, more than three thousand people entered various European countries and most of them went into Germany...and those people, the Qadiani, who belong to not only Lahore, even thousand miles far from Lahore, they also came and asked asylum in Germany, and Sweden and Norway”.*

The presenter: *“Because they say their mosques have been attacked, their worship place has been attacked. Now can I just draw your attention and the viewers’ attention, to one of our great Eastern philosopher and poet, Sir Dr Allama<sup>46</sup> Muhammad Iqbal<sup>47</sup>...he says if this group, the Ahmadiyyas, is so beneficial for the Government, the British Government at that time when the British were ruling India, if this group is so beneficial for the Government, it is authorised to reward the services of this group, Ahmadiyya, but it is difficult for the*

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<sup>45</sup> The Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) is the main intelligence agency in Pakistan responsible for analysing national security information.

<sup>46</sup> An honorary title carried by scholars of Islamic law and philosophy.

<sup>47</sup> Muhammad Iqbal: A poet and philosopher, regarded as the ideological founder of Pakistan.

*Muslim nation to ignore as its collective existence is in danger because of this group”.*

Samiullah Malik: *“It’s very true. Let me tell you –”.*

The presenter: *“So why is our existence in danger because of Ahmadiyyas?”*

The presenter and guest discussed Muhammad Iqbal’s views on the finality of prophethood and the Ahmadiyya community. The presenter mentioned that Muhammad Iqbal was Kashmiri. This led to a discussion on Kashmir and the presenter and guest alleged that the Ahmadiyya community was silent on atrocities in Kashmir because it believed that Pakistan would be diminished and become part of India. They then agreed that Ahmadiyyas had created the problems in Kashmir while Sir Muhammad Zafrulla Khan<sup>48</sup> was foreign minister. The presenter said he would quote Muhammad Iqbal to explain why *“Qadianis are saying...to separate...East Pakistan from West Pakistan and the Kashmir issue”*. The following exchange then took place:

[18:32]

The presenter: *“Allama Iqbal said ‘Their, Qadiani’s, diplomatic interpretations are dictated merely by a desire to remain within the fold of Islam for obvious political advantages”.*

Samiullah Malik: *“It’s very true. I mean, just to mention, this is the intention of Qadianis actually, you know, this one”.*

The presenter then said that he believed there were a few main points which distinguished Ahmadi beliefs from Islam. He explained that the first point was the significance of the belief of the finality of prophethood and the second point was the false claimants of prophethood. The presenter and guest then began to reflect on various individuals whom they believed had made a false claim to prophethood. The presenter explained that many people had claimed to be a prophet before Mirza Ghulam Ahmad but such claims were never accepted by Muslim communities. The presenter then said:

[18:41] *“The false claimants to prophethood has been there, but now in this and last century, the issue we are facing is this Qadiani, Qadiani cult. Many ex-Ahmadi, they strongly believe, it is publicly available on the website, they strongly claim, ex-Ahmadis, that ‘we were part of a cult. We were not allowed to read the books of the true Muslims. We were not allowed to check the references from our own books. And we were told to stay away from these mullahs because they would contaminate your brains. Hence we could not see the truth’...Thousands of families have become Muslim [in Arabic, ‘Praise be to God’]. So, my humble request to our Qadiani and Ahmadi friends is please, please look at the literature. We are not against you, we are not anti-Qadiani or*

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<sup>48</sup> A Pakistani politician who was Pakistan’s Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1947 to 1954 while concurrently serving as leader of Pakistan’s delegation to the United Nations.



*anti-Ahmadiyya. We are just pro-Khatme Nabuwwat to propagate and create awareness with regards to the aqidah<sup>49</sup> Khatme Nabuwwat, the belief of finality of prophethood”.*

Samiullah Malik said “very true, very true”, and the presenter continued:

*“We love you, we respect you, and we want you to just look at it at your leisure. If you have any questions, please come and speak to [us]. Even your Khalifah, Mirza Masroor Sahab<sup>50</sup>, we welcome him to have a debate with us anytime, wherever he chooses. So, it is dialogue, let’s just sit down and talk about it if you have an issue. We do not promote extremism, we do not promote terrorism...So, it is not something which we should be taking this propaganda of Qadianis that whoever talks about Khatme Nabuwwat, they are extremists and terrorists”.*

Following this, the presenter explained that, according to Islamic theology, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was a false claimant of prophethood and therefore outside the fold of Islam. The presenter then began to discuss the claims made by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. The presenter said that as well as claiming to be a prophet, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad had also claimed to be Imam Mahdi<sup>51</sup> and Jesus Christ. He added that his third point was the difference between Ahmadi and Islamic beliefs on Imam Mahdi. The presenter and guest then went on to discuss Islamic beliefs about Imam Mahdi. The following exchange took place:

[18:49]

The presenter: *“Every Muslim believes that Imam Mahdi Rizwan is going to come near the day of judgement. Hence, Mirza Ghulam Qadiani said listen, I’m the Mahdi I have come now, believe in me as Mahdi. So, Islamic scholars they said well there are some signs what is going to happen before Imam Mahdi Rizwan comes”.*

Samiullah Malik: *“Such as dajjal came before Imam Mahdi, isn’t it?”*

The presenter: *“No, no. Dajjal will be afterwards”.*

Samiullah Malik: *“No, no, no. I’m asking whether the Qadian are dajjal. Qadians are also one of dajjal. Qadian, I’m not talking of that instance of Dajjal, [In Urdu] I am talking about this dajjal being a manifestation of evil.*

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<sup>49</sup> Aqidah: Ideology.

<sup>50</sup> See footnote 32.

<sup>51</sup> See footnote 27.

[Reverting to English] *I mean, that meaning I'm not talking about that one. This is also dajjali fitnah<sup>52</sup> this one –*”.

The presenter: *“No this is dajjali fitnah, that is something different. What I'm saying is Dajjal which has been mentioned in –*”.

Samiullah Malik: *“No, no I'm not talking for that one –*”.

The presenter: *“Real, that Dajjal [In Urdu] dajjal is a fairly common Arabic word which is used to describe a false prophet. If you say Ad-Dajjal you are referring to the false prophet who will appear at the end of times according to Islamic eschatology. [Reverting to English] That Dajjal is going to come afterwards...”*”.

The presenter and guest continued their discussion on the Islamic prophecy of the arrival of Imam Mahdi and Jesus Christ to defeat Dajjal. This was followed by a “comparative analysis” between what the presenter described as the “real Imam Mahdi and Isa<sup>53</sup> and the false Mahdi and Isa”. The presenter and guest discussed why they believed Mirza Ghulam Ahmed could not be Imam Mahdi according to their interpretation of Islamic theology. The following exchange then took place:

[18:55]

The presenter: *“For God's sake the Qadianis and the Ahmadis they need to really read the material even from their own books. Mirza Sahab himself believed, himself believed in aqidah Khatme Nabuwwat before. Then he changed –*”.

Samiullah Malik: *“True”*.

The presenter: *“Then he changed himself. In his previous literature, he believed anybody who claims to be a prophet or believe in any other new prophet after Rasul salam<sup>54</sup>, he's an infidel, he's out of fold of Islam. This is what Mirza Sahab's belief was”*.

Samiullah Malik: *“Because he changed everything while he was selected by British people actually, you know, to organise [stem] jihad actually, you know”*.

The presenter: *“Well, yes that is another chapter, which is a very detailed chapter which we need to analyse later on sometime probably”*.

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<sup>52</sup> The meaning of the phrase “dajjali fitnah” is considered below. The speakers in this passage discuss the word “dajjal” as meaning a false prophet. See footnote 11 above for the meaning of “fitnah”.

<sup>53</sup> Arabic term for Jesus.

<sup>54</sup> A reference to the Prophet Muhammad.

Samiullah Malik: *“But even then actually, this guy actually he’s not faithful to the British people even then you know”.*

The presenter then said that since the time of Prophet Muhammad, claimants of prophethood had never been allowed to *“propagate these false claims”* and that current Muslim communities had a responsibility to ensure this continued. He described other organisations that had also declared Ahmadis as non-Muslims including, for example, the Islamic Fiqh Academy<sup>55</sup> and the Muslim World League. The presenter added that in 1984 the Pakistani President had issued an ordinance that people who would not recognise the constitution should be punished. He continued:

[18:58] *“I don’t know where the victimhood is coming from, where the [idea of] persecution is coming from. This is very simple. This is the law of the land...and this will be crime in Pakistan for the Qadianis to call their leader as a prophet, or his wives as the mothers of Muslims, or their worship places as mosques”.*

He listed the different types of places of worship for various religions. He said that other religions enjoyed freedom because they did not *“attach themselves with the Muslims for political...benefits”*. He added that he believed that therefore *“this is not something that we are demonising the Qadianis, the Ahmadiyyas, this is a reality, this is a truth”*. He said *“of course, truth hurts. Nonetheless this is government institutions responsibility as well not to impose the Ahmadiyyas on the Muslim organisations, or the Muslims”*. He added that Islam, mosques and the Qur’an were *“our brand name”* and that *“Muslims will not allow at any time, at any cost, Ahmadiyya’s to become part of Islam, as they believe now”*. He continued that when *“Ahmadiyyas”* had denounced their former beliefs they had been *“openly welcomed by the Muslim community”*.

The presenter concluded the discussion with Samiullah Malik by reiterating the importance of the Amendment and stating that it was not just to do with a religious issue but also to do with the state institutions strongly believing that the Ahmadiyya movement was a national security threat. The discussion ended at 19:02.

The programme then featured a series of Quranic recitations, Na’ats, and lectures in Urdu about Prophet Muhammad and the Amendment from various Islamic scholars.

A speaker gave a lecture which covered a range of topics, including, for example: the life of Prophet Muhammad, Qur’anic interpretations in favour of the finality of prophethood and the events which led to the Amendment in 1974. The speaker then gave an example of when Muhammad had said that there would be no prophet after him. The speaker described a story in which the Prophet Muhammad said, *“If there were to be a prophet after me, it would have been Umar<sup>56”</sup>*. He explained that although the prophet described Umar as a virtuous companion, he could not be a prophet given the finality of Muhammad’s prophethood. He then said:

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<sup>55</sup> An Islamic Academy based in Saudi Arabia.

<sup>56</sup> Umar ibn al-Khattab: A senior companion of the Prophet Muhammad and the second caliph of the Rashidun Caliphate i.e. The Rashidun are the first four caliphs after the death of the Prophet Muhammad.

[21:02] *“So, if today, any false claimer, any dajjal or any liar, claims the prophethood, openly or secretly, he shall be among the companions of Dajjal and has no link with the ummah of the Holy Prophet”.*

Following a series of Na’ats and Qur’anic recitations, another speaker gave a lecture about the personality traits of prophets, as described in the Qur’an. The speaker explained that if someone makes a claim to prophethood, the Qur’an states that their lifestyle and personality should be scrutinised by the Muslim community. He added that this was the reason why they had discussed the personality of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. The speaker then said:

[21:28] *“So, [Mirza Ghulam Ahmad] thought where should he get the argument to support his prophethood. So, he said, ‘I am the promised Messiah’, and started using the arguments which were in favour of the Messiah. So, someone might have told that ignorant that Imam Mahdi is also yet to be born in that period. He thought that if Imam Mahdi does not appear in my era then my prophethood will be proved false. So, he claimed that he was also Imam Mahdi so that his claim remains true. But that ignorant didn’t know that Dajjal was also to come in the same era. All three will come in the same era. If he knew, he might have claimed that he is Dajjal himself too. So, in fact, he was dajjal and whoever claims any false claim like this, he is dajjal in the light of Hadith, Islamic beliefs. May Allah keep us and our generations safe. Hazrat<sup>57</sup> Allama Kashmiri<sup>58</sup> has said that I have read from the first day and there is no fitnah greater than the fitnah of claimers of false prophethood. This is such a huge fitnah that we should try to protect ourselves from that”.*

This was followed by a lecture in Urdu on the origins of the belief of finality of prophethood. During the lecture, the speaker discussed various lines of the Qur’an which he believed provided proof that Muhammad was the last prophet.

Imam Qasim Rashid Ahmad, the founder of Iqra TV, then gave the closing speech in Urdu. During the speech, he warned that when some people [22:14] *“say ‘[in Arabic] There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is the messenger’, they do not mean it our lord, Muhammad, instead they mean their Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Qadiani in their mind”.* He added that *“they used the name of Islam for their religion, which is against the basic principle of Islam, that religion in which the fundamental principles of Islam are violated”.* He said that no other religions had *“attempted to steal the identity of anyone else’s religion”.* He also said that prophets have their own identities and do not assume the identity of previous prophets, and asked how Mirza Ghulam Ahmad could claim to be Muhammad and Christ. He added that *“those claims/advice, which is a called religion, harming them and using dirty words, I think is not the glory of a prophet”.* He said:

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<sup>57</sup> An Arabic title used to honour a person.

<sup>58</sup> A reference to Indian Islamic scholar, Shaykh Anwar Shah Kashmiri a noted opponent of the Ahmadiyya movement who issued a fatwa condemning the movement.

[22:26] *“So my demand would be that if anyone wants to start another religion, then [they are] most welcome, you do it on your own. We will ask you to treat the same way we treat non-Muslims. But if somebody tries to take away our identity, if someone tries to distort the face Muslims and Islam, tries to change it, tries to do plastic surgery, then we...will never be ready for this. They said clearly that this is our religion and sect from today. So fine, then from now on you are non-Muslim. But our relation with you will be the same as with it is with other religions. So in this way, I say today that if the Qadianis accept that it is okay we are non-Muslims, our religion should be given another name and the Qadiani name is given to their religion, we will say that our fifty percent dispute will come to end. I say that at this time in which honour is not given, or as a human, could not give sympathy or compassion, you will see that it will change. You will find the same affability which Muslims have with non-Muslims”.*

Imam Qasim Rashid Ahmad reiterated that the purpose of the programme was not to cause dissension, but instead to discuss why Ahmadis are considered non-Muslim. He then said in Urdu:

[22:29] *“The last thing I want to say is, you may call it an oath or an argument or an open Invitation, this platform, Iqra TV, is a very careful and sensitive platform. We have tried our best. We should not do a programme to spread dissention and against religion. Our programming today was about educating and teaching Muslims. No one was abused, nor anyone insulted. Now if you say that you are calling us disbelievers, then what insult can be more than this, and what will we do now to this level. Because we are proving that you are not in the circle of Islam and why not? It has been proven all day today. That means we are not making any kind of claim that we have no argument, proof of it. We're not abusing you. That means we are not disgracing you, we are not abusing your mother and sister, we are not doing such things. This is not such a platform, it is not such a conference. We presented the whole conference to you gentlemen in the manner of understanding while keeping ourselves in the civilization. And our mission always will be that, whether it is on this topic or any other topic, we will speak in the circle of humanity”.*

He then invited anyone in the Ahmadiyya community who wanted to dispute the claims made in the programme to have a discussion with the religious scholars.

[22:31] *“Now my invitation is to you gentlemen that this platform, Iqra TV, is a platform for all of you. If followers of any Qadiani religion think that our voice should reach to Iqra TV, then I give you an open invitation to come and sit and have a discussion with our religious scholars. In this discussion you will see our attitude, you will never feel any insecurity or*

*insult or any concern from us anywhere. I openly invite the followers of any Qadiani religion or followers of a claimant of any prophethood, if you want to come and prove that we are Muslims and Imam Qasim is a non-Muslim or Allama Anees Sahib is not a true Muslim, then we'll welcome you here. You may come and talk face to face and sit down with us and exchange each arguments. We present our arguments and you present your arguments, and then we leave the final decision to the public. I do not think that such an invocation will be given anywhere, a challenging matter will be made, a controversial matter will be made that we claim will challenge with us. We're not talking of challenge, we're talking about the dialogue, we're talking of the discussion, you come and sit down with us. If you ever feel that we do not want to sit with these scholars, but we want to sit down with Qasim or with any of the personalities, you may come. We will not bring the top-notch experts in to compete, anyone of us can sit with you. Because it is not a debate, our goal is not to defeat you. Our purpose is to prove our point of view and to listen to your point of view. So either of us will be ready to sit down with you and have a discussion. Allah is witness that we are totally sincere in this claim, invitation, and if anyone of you contacts us, we will be ready to set up the programme for you. How much more can I open my heart for you. If there was anything more than that, I would have put it in front of you too".*

Imam Qasim Rashid Ahmad then thanked the guests and informed viewers of upcoming conferences on the channel.

We considered that the content raised issues under the following Code rules:

Rule 3.3: "Material which contains abusive or derogatory treatment of individuals, groups, religions or communities, must not be included in television...except where it is justified by the context".

Rule 2.3: "In applying generally accepted standards broadcasters must ensure that material which may cause offence is justified by the context...Such material may include but is not limited to...discriminatory treatment or language...".

Ofcom requested the Licensee's comments on how the material complied with these rules.

## **Response**

In its initial response, Channel I made various points of mitigation against finding the programme in breach of the Code. We considered these points in forming our Preliminary View, which was that both rules were breached. In its second response, made following receipt of our Preliminary View that the programme was in breach of Rules 3.3 and 2.3, the Licensee elaborated on its view that the programme was not in breach of the Code.

### The Licensee's initial response

The Licensee said it did not consider that the programme was inflammatory towards the Ahmadiyya community.

It said when discussing theological differences, it is inevitable that “one scripture would assert itself over another and it is hardly a matter...of sentiments being hurt if one scripture is denounced as ‘wrong’, or if its followers categorised as ‘non-believers’”.

It added that the words used during the programme were “historic and an integral part of the narrative of Islam” which originated from the time of the Prophet Mohammad and the revelation of the Qur’an.

In particular, it said that ‘fitnah’ and ‘dajjali fitnah’ “are merely expressions of division to cause disunity” in Arabic. With regard to ‘dajjali fitnah’, Channel I said that the expression signified “a major and lasting disunity before the ‘day of judgement’”. It added that “these terms do not translate well as the division and disunity are religious as opposed to social or political”. Regarding the use of the word ‘Qadiani’, Channel I said that it “is not a derogatory term” but a “well-defined term for the [largest branch of the] Ahmadiyya community” which is used to “differentiate from the other Ahmadiyya [branches]”.

Channel I also referred to its compliance arrangements (see below).

### The Licensee's second response

Channel I said that the programme was not in breach of the Code. It did not contend that the Programme was beyond criticism. However, it said the “Preliminary View [made] a number of fundamental errors and [was] unfairly critical”.

Channel I said that Ofcom’s Preliminary View had correctly drawn the distinction between legitimate theological criticism and abuse but had “cast the net of ‘abuse’ too widely” and left “insufficient room for robust expression of theological disagreement”. It said that the content Ofcom had provisionally found in breach of the Code related to “a relatively small portion of an all-day conference which was broadcast live” and that Ofcom’s provisional finding was “not well-founded”. It acknowledged that some of the broadcast statements “would have benefited from greater qualification, challenge or context than they received in the programme” adding, “but to nowhere near the extent alleged in the Preliminary View”.

The Licensee said that “finality of prophethood...is a fundamental part of mainstream Islam” and that since “the Qur’an calls Muhammad the ‘Seal of the Prophets’” he was understood by “mainstream Muslims” to be “the final prophet”. It said that some in the Ahmadiyya community regarded Mirza Ghulam Ahmad as “a kind of Prophet of God, in a way which is inconsistent with mainstream Islamic belief in Finality of Prophethood”<sup>59</sup>. It added that “most Muslims don’t regard the Ahmadiyya’s as Muslims.”

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<sup>59</sup> The Licensee referred to an extract from an [article](#) in Oxford Islamic Studies Online: “Ghulām Aḥmad’s repeated assertion that Allah made him a prophet was the most controversial formulation of his claim... it contradicted the Muslim dogma of Muḥammad as the last prophet... Muḥammad’s honor... was said to have

The Licensee distinguished between two branches of the Ahmadiyya movement, the Lahorite and Qadiani branches<sup>60</sup>, saying that the term Qadiani was to “distinguish between the two principal branches of the Ahmadiyya movement and with no disrespect intended”. The Licensee went on to say, “Qadiani Ahmadiyyas, however, regard themselves as the only true Muslims”. By way of example, it said that “it is the official position of the Muslim World League<sup>61</sup>, as well as the law of Pakistan, that the Ahmadiyya are non-Muslims, while on the other hand the principal Ahmadi organisation in the UK uses the slogan “True Islam” and the website trueislam.co.uk”. Quoting an article in Oxford Islamic Studies Online<sup>62</sup>, Channel I added that “the Ahmadiyya movement is a missionary faith”. It said:

“It is within the bounds of legitimate theological debate for a mainstream Muslim to argue that the claims made by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad are false, that belief in his Prophethood is wrong, heretical and inconsistent with true Islam, and that those who propagate that belief risk leading true believers astray”.

#### *Use of the word “Qadiani” in the programme*

Channel I accepted that “‘Qadiani’ is not the preferred term which members of that branch of the Ahmadiyya community now use to describe themselves, and that they regard it as pejorative in some contexts”. This, it said, did “not mean that Ofcom should regard its use in the programme as ‘abusive’”. It added that “in somewhat analogous circumstances, Ofcom’s Fairness Committee has previously dismissed a complaint that the use of the term ‘Moonies’ to describe members of the Unification Church was derogatory and offensive”<sup>63</sup>.

As noted above, the Licensee argued that the term Qadiani distinguished between different branches of the Ahmadiyya movement. In support of this, it quoted the website of one branch of the Ahmadiyya community, the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam, as stating that:

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been tarnished by Ghulām Aḥmad's claim to have received divine revelation after the completion of Muḥammad's mission”.

<sup>60</sup> The Licensee referred to *Islam for Dummies* by Professor Malcolm Clark: “The Lahorites... believed that Ahmad was only a renewer. By not calling him a prophet, they remained closer to orthodox Islam. The other group, the Qadianis (named after the birthplace of Ahmad), believes that Ahmad was a prophet but not of the same type as Mohammad. Because of these claims, most Muslims don’t regard the Ahmadiyyas as Muslims... Qadiani Ahmadiyyas, however, regard themselves as the only true Muslims”.

<sup>61</sup> The Licensee referred to the Resolution of the Muslim World League (MWL), Islamic Fiqh Academy in Makkah al-Mukarramah, 1974.

<sup>62</sup> “The Aḥmadīs consider the peaceful propagation of their version of Islam among Muslims and non-Muslims alike to be an indispensable activity; in this they are persistent and unrelenting”, Oxford Islamic Studies Online.

<sup>63</sup> Pg. 50 of [Issue 54 of Ofcom’s Broadcast and On Demand Bulletin](#), published on 20 February 2006, stated: “In considering the use of the term ‘moonie’ the Fairness Committee found that the letters provided by [the complainant] did not show that the BBC had provided an undertaking not to use the term. Further the BBC cited a senior Unification Church member using the term to describe himself and pointed to its use in the era highlighted by the film, namely the sixties and seventies. The Fairness Committee therefore found that the use of the term “moonie” did not result in unfairness to the Unification Church”.



- “the Ahmadiyya Movement split into two groups, the Lahore branch and the Qadian branch. This website represents the former group”<sup>64</sup>; and,
- that members of the latter group “call themselves Ahmadis, but are generally known as Qadianis”<sup>65</sup>.

The Licensee added that “the latter group’s preferred term [for itself] ‘Ahmadiyya Muslim Community’ was not “one which could be adopted without qualification by many mainstream Muslims, since that community’s claim to be ‘Muslim’ is contested”. It also said that “some mainstream Muslims have theological objections to using the term ‘Ahmadiyya’ or ‘Ahmadi’ [as] ‘Ahmad’ is another name given to the Prophet Muhammad, and it is after him, rather than Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, that the Ahmadiyya community is named”. It said that in the programme Mr Malik “explained that, for this reason, using the term ‘Ahmadiyya’ would be an implicit endorsement of that group’s contested claim to be Muslims” as follows:

[15:42] “...*Muhammad and Ahmad* [in Arabic, ‘peace be upon him’] as our prophet we are Ahmadi, they are Qadiani actually. I think we must, from now onwards, call them Qadiani...they want to call [themselves] Ahmadiyya...if you keep your name Samiullah or Toaha Qureshi, anyone actually, it doesn’t mean that you’re a Muslim unless you believe all of our faith. And now if you ask me about the faith of Ahmadiyya, it’s Qadiani. Myself actually, I will always call them Qadiani”.

Channel I added that the Code “neither requires nor permits Ofcom to take sides in a dispute of this nature by insisting that members of one group use another group’s preferred terminology despite their own objections to it”. It also said that “the crucial point that the Preliminary View apparently fails to appreciate is that it is not all branches of the Ahmadiyya, but specifically the ‘Qadiani’ branch, who hold the belief in the Prophethood of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad which is so starkly inconsistent with the mainstream Islamic doctrine of Finality of Prophethood”<sup>66</sup>. It said this point “was made in the

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<sup>64</sup> See the [Ahmadiyyat](#) section of [The Lahore Ahmaddiya Movement in Islam website](#).

<sup>65</sup> See the [Comparative Study of the Beliefs of the Two Sections of the Ahmadiyya Movement \(Lahore vs Qadiani Groups\)](#) on the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam website.

<sup>66</sup> Channel I referred to an article in Oxford Islamic Studies Online and *Islam for Dummies*, quoting as follows:

- “...the Aḥmadiyyah split into two factions, known as the Qādiyānī and the Lāhorī...The Qādiānīs stressed Ghulām Aḥmad’s claim to prophethood,...and left little doubt that they considered non-Aḥmadi Muslims infidels. The Lāhorīs, on the other hand, held that Ghulām Aḥmad never claimed to be more than a “renewer” (mujaddid) of religion... and they deemed infidels only those Muslims who regarded the Aḥmadīs the same. This attitude toward non-Aḥmadīs was intended to minimize friction with other Muslims” (Oxford Online Studies).
- “The religious thought of the Aḥmadiyyah until 1914, and of its Qādiyānī branch since then, revolves around Ghulām Aḥmad’s persistent claim to be a divinely inspired religious thinker and reformer...” (Oxford Online Studies).
- “The Lahorites also believed that Ahmad was only a renewer. By not calling him a prophet, they remained closer to orthodox Islam...The other group, the Qadianis (named after the birthplace of Ahmad), believes that Ahmad was a prophet but not of the same type as Mohammad. Because of these claims, most Muslims don’t regard the Ahmadiyyas as Muslims”. *Islam for Dummies* pages 248-249.

Programme by the presenter: *“The Lahori group doesn’t believe that Mr Mirza was a prophet. They believe in him as a reformer”*. It added that “asserting Finality of Prophethood does not, therefore, entail criticism of the beliefs of the different branches of the Ahmadiyya equally, but primarily the beliefs of those who do regard Mirza Ghulam Ahmad as a prophet: namely the ‘Qadiani’”.

The Licensee said, “the Second Amendment which was under discussion at the conference itself referred to ‘persons of Qadiani group or the Lahori group (who call themselves ‘Ahmadis’)’<sup>67</sup> and the term ‘Qadiani’ appears in the current Penal Code of Pakistan<sup>68</sup>”.

Channel I also pointed out that “the term ‘Qadianis’ has been used in Ofcom’s Broadcast Bulletin on occasion without comment or criticism”<sup>69</sup>.

Channel I concluded that “‘Qadiani’ was used in the programme for legitimate reasons and was not abusive”.

### *Use of the word “fitnah” in the programme*

The Licensee disagreed with Ofcom’s understanding of the meaning of ‘fitnah’, as noted in a footnote to our Preliminary View. This footnote stated that it was Ofcom’s understanding that this Arabic Islamic word is generally used as a pejorative term, particularly in religious debate, to describe dissension or schism in which the believers’ purity of faith is in grave danger. Referring to the [definition in Oxford Islamic Studies Online](#), Channel I said the primary meaning of ‘fitnah’ was a trial or test. It added:

“in any event, even assuming Ofcom’s definition to be correct, for a mainstream Muslim to describe the spread among Muslims of the belief in the Prophethood of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad as ‘dissension or schism in which the believers’ purity of faith is in grave danger’ would fall squarely within the bounds of legitimate theological criticism, rather than abuse”.

Channel I said that “leaving aside instances of ‘dajjali fitnah’...the word ‘fitnah’ appear[ed] only on [three] occasions in the text quoted in the Preliminary View”. These were:

[15:13] *“...this is the day that we realised the finality of prophet [in Arabic, ‘peace be upon him’] duty. Because, there is only one **fitnah**, called Qadiani, it’s only in Pakistan. Because it’s grown up from Qadian<sup>70</sup> then transferred in Pakistan. The background of this **fitnah** actually,*

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<sup>67</sup> The Licensee referred to the [online edition of The Constitution of Pakistan](#).

<sup>68</sup> The Licensee referred to [Penal Code of Pakistan, Chapter XV, art. 298B and 298C](#).

<sup>69</sup> See [Issue 184 of Ofcom’s Broadcast and On Demand Bulletin](#), published on 20 June 2011, pg. 14, and [Issue 222 of Ofcom’s Broadcast and On Demand Bulletin](#), published on 21 January 2013, pg. 20.

<sup>70</sup> Qadian is a town in Punjab, India. It is the birthplace of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the founder of the Ahmadiyya movement.

*because in 1857, when the British sarkar<sup>71</sup>, the British Government actually, they ruled the subcontinent actually at that time. In 1857 actually there was a very big problem between the Hindu and the Sikhs and Muslims...”* [Text in bold is emphasis placed by Ofcom].

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[15:18] *“I would like to tell you viewers what really the Qadiani, I mean the **fitnah**, what he mentioned actually, Ghulam Qadiani<sup>72</sup>, in his book. Then let you viewers decide why I call it **fitnah**”.* [Text in bold is emphasis placed by Ofcom.]

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[21:28] *“So, [Mirza Ghulam Ahmad] thought where should he get the argument to support his prophethood... He thought that if Imam Mahdi does not appear in my era then my prophethood will be proved false. So, he claimed that he was also Imam Mahdi...But that ignorant didn’t know that Dajjal was also to come in the same era...So, in fact, he was dajjal and whoever claims any false claim like this, he is dajjal in the light of Hadith, Islamic beliefs...Hazrat<sup>73</sup> Allama Kashmiri<sup>74</sup> has said that...there is **no fitnah greater than the fitnah of claimers of false prophethood**. This is such **a huge fitnah** that we should try to protect ourselves from that”.* [Text in bold is emphasis placed by Ofcom.]

Channel I said that these extracts did not support Ofcom’s Preliminary View that:

“in this case, taking into account the context of an extended discussion of an amendment to the Pakistani constitution and the historical context in which that occurred, the words [“*fitnah*” and “*dajjali fitnah*”] were used pejoratively to refer to the Ahmadiyya community as a cause of disorder within Pakistan and a danger to the state and to the faith of Islam”.

The Licensee said that, in these extracts, the speaker was “making a theological criticism of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad’s religious writings, and in particular his claim to Prophethood”. It said there was “no evidence for the allegation that...‘*fitnah*’ [was] being used...‘to refer to the Ahmadiyya community as a

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<sup>71</sup> An Urdu word meaning “authority”.

<sup>72</sup> A reference to the founder of the Ahmadiyya movement, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad.

<sup>73</sup> An Arabic title used to honour a person.

<sup>74</sup> A reference to Indian Islamic scholar, Shaykh Anwar Shah Kashmiri a noted opponent of the Ahmadiyya movement who issued a fatwa condemning the movement.

cause of disorder within Pakistan and a danger to the state”. It added that the reference to Pakistan in the first extract “[did] not come close to justifying this allegation”.

### *Use of the word “dajjal” in the programme*

Channel I said “dajjal” has different meanings depending on the context. It said it has a “specific meaning in Islamic eschatology (which features an ‘antichrist’-type figure called al-Dajjal (‘the Deceiver’)) [and] a broader meaning to denote a false prophet<sup>75</sup>, or one who deceives, including through false religious teaching”. It said there was a clear example of the latter in the programme at [21:28]: “*whoever claims any false claim like this, he is dajjal in the light of Hadith, Islamic beliefs*”. It added that “Mirza Ghulam Ahmad described ‘Christian missionaries and European philosophers’ as ‘Dajjal’”<sup>76</sup>.

Channel I said that Ofcom’s Preliminary View was “confused and confusing in its treatment of the term ‘dajjal’”. It said that the term first appeared in the Preliminary View when it quoted from the Programme at [17:43]:

*“Now, if someone makes such statements publicly which we term as tantamount to being infidelity, and this is utter apostasy, but we were faced with such an issue which was not open, when something is done behind the scene, we call it dajjal. Dajjal means to mix the right with wrong through lies”.*

It said this content contained its own definition of what it meant by ‘dajjal’, but a footnote in the Preliminary View on this content “purport[ed] to gloss the term as follows: ‘In Islamic theology, Dajjal is an evil figure impersonating the true Messiah. Ofcom understands that “dajjal” can be used as an offensive term, equivalent to the term “anti-Christ” in Christianity’”. It said this footnote was “misleading” because “in the quoted passage, [dajjal was] plainly not being used either to refer to a theological figure or as equivalent to ‘anti-Christ’”.

Channel I referred to Ofcom’s discussion, in its Preliminary View, of the programme’s content at [18:49], in which we said that “the presenter and guest differentiated between the theological Dajjal, an Islamic figure believed to be a false messiah by Muslims, and the descriptive phrase ‘dajjali fitnah’ which Samiullah Malik defined as “*a manifestation of evil*”. Ofcom considered that in this case, the presenter and guest referred to Ahmadi beliefs using the latter pejorative phrase”. The Licensee said this was incorrect, as “although Mr Malik said (in Urdu) that he was “*talking about this dajjal being a manifestation of evil*” he did not purport to define “*dajjali fitnah*” in those terms”. It added that our Preliminary View did “not spell out what meaning (other than the obviously inapt ‘anti-Christ’) it [found] ‘dajjal’ to have”.

Ofcom’s Preliminary View had taken into account that a speaker had said “*Dajjal means to mix the right with wrong through lies*” and described the Ahmadiyya community as a whole as a “*group of*

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<sup>75</sup> The Licensee noted that the Prophet Muhammad predicted that “30 dajjals” would come, each one falsely claiming to be a prophet, of whom only the last would be “al-Dajjal”, the False Messiah associated with the coming of the end of time.

<sup>76</sup> The Licensee referred to a quote of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad on the [Ahmadiyya section of the ‘trueislam’ website](#), under the heading Dajjal.

*dajjal*". Channel I said it was "not clear why [Ofcom's Preliminary View] apparently [regarded] the former as consisting abuse rather than theological criticism". It said the latter was "taken out of context from a quotation of words said to have been spoken in 1974 ([18:08] "When I got the news of the passage of the bill while I was giving a speech at Rajthail, I announced the good news with these words...")".

#### *Use of the word "dajjali fitnah" in the programme*

Ofcom's stated understanding in its Preliminary View was that 'dajjali fitnah' is "a pejorative phrase used to describe something as satanic or evil and a grave danger to true believers of Islam". Channel I said that Ofcom had not given a source for this definition.

Ofcom's Preliminary View considered that:

- "[in the] context of an extended discussion of an amendment to the Pakistani constitution and the historical context in which that occurred, [*fitnah*" and "*dajjali fitnah*"] were used pejoratively to refer to the Ahmadiyya community as a cause of disorder within Pakistan and a danger to the state and to the faith of Islam"; and,
- "the use of the phrase 'dajjali fitnah' was particularly derogatory and abusive as it characterised Ahmadi beliefs as satanic and heretical".

Channel I said that this conclusion was "unsupported by detailed reasoning or evidence" and that there was "simply no basis for suggesting that the use of this religious term (meaning something like 'trial of deception') involve[d] [such] political allegations". It added that "criticising Ahmadi beliefs for creating a 'major and lasting disunity'<sup>77</sup> [was] not abusive".

The Licensee added that "Ofcom's conclusion that the term 'dajjali fitnah' [was] abusive appear[ed] to have been heavily influenced by its understanding of the connotations of the word 'satanic'". It said that the programme content in question did not include the word 'satanic' and that the word could "easily cause cross-cultural misunderstanding". In this regard, it quoted *Islam for Dummies*<sup>78</sup>.

Channel I said that "describing a belief which is perceived as contradicting one of the fundamental tenets of a mainstream religion as 'heretical' [was] theological criticism rather than abuse" and that "the same would be true of describing it as mischievous, or as presenting a grave danger of tempting true believers into error".

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<sup>77</sup> This was the Licensee's preferred definition of "dajjali fitnah" in its initial response.

<sup>78</sup> "Satan or Iblis is a fallen angel in Islam who was expelled from the presence of God when he refused God's command to bow down and worship Adam. Until the Day of Judgment, God allows Satan to tempt humanity and spread mischief on the earth. Although frequently mentioned in the Qur'an, Satan in Islam isn't the powerful, anti-God figure that he becomes in Christian and Jewish traditions....Iblis/Satan doesn't assume the same importance that Satan/the Devil has in Christianity. Sometimes, in Christianity, Satan is seen as a superpower almost equal to God, although God and Jesus will ultimately defeat him at the end of time. In contrast, while Iblis/Satan is a troublesome force in the Islamic world view, nothing, including Satan, comes close to being an almost-equal counterpart to God...". Clark, *Islam for Dummies*, pp.50, 68.

### *Use of the word “cult” in the programme*

Channel I referred to Ofcom’s understanding of the word “cult” in Broadcast Bulletin 198. This was that the term indicated “a specific system of religious worship, a sect devoted to such a system or an intense interest or devotion to a person, idea or activity which is deemed to govern such a system”. It said the word could “certainly carry critical connotations”, which it exemplified through dictionary definitions<sup>79</sup>, and that the word was used critically in the programme. However, it said that did “not mean that the word crosse[d] the line from criticism into abuse”.

### *“Victimhood”*

Channel I objected to the use of the term “cult of victimhood” in Ofcom’s Preliminary View because it was not a phrase used in the programme itself<sup>80</sup>.

More broadly regarding the use of the term “victimhood”, Channel I said that the presenter used the term at [16:13] in a “defence of the necessity of discussing Finality of Prophethood and to pre-empt anticipated criticism of the conference from the Ahmadiyya community”. It said this did not amount to abusive or derogatory treatment. It added that it did “not accept the translation of the Urdu word ‘zulm’ as ‘atrocities’”. It said the word as used here would be “better translated as ‘oppression’ or ‘injustice’”.

Channel I said the presenter also used the term “victimhood” at [18:17] before he and his guest “engaged in a discussion to the effect that, although Ahmadis were being attacked in Pakistan, these attacks formed part of “a wave of extremism and terrorism in Pakistan” which had both Ahmadi and non-Ahmadi victims...and that attacks on Ahmadi victims had received a disproportionate degree of publicity”. The Licensee said the “expression of this view did not amount to derogatory or abusive treatment”.

Channel I said that the presenter’s third use of the term “victimhood” was when he asked his guest to comment on allegations made in an article from the *London Post* website. It accepted that “the presenter ought to have taken greater care in the language used here, both in distancing himself from the allegations made in the *London Post*, and in differentiating between allegations relating to individuals and the Ahmadiyya group as a whole”. It “submitted, however, that this unfortunate use of language in the middle of a very long live broadcast [was] not sufficient to place the Programme as a whole in breach of the Code”.

### *“Plant planted by the Britons”*

Channel I said that it “would not seek to justify” certain of Mr Malik’s statements in the discussion at [17:16 – 17:29]. It said that Ofcom’s Preliminary View was incorrect to say that the presenter either made or endorsed the statements. It added that, rather, “he repeatedly tried to bring the guest back

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<sup>79</sup> The Licensee referred to: the [Cambridge Dictionary definition](#) of a religious group “whose beliefs are considered extreme or strange by many people”; the [Merriam-Webster definition](#) of “a religion regarded as unorthodox or spurious”; and, the [Chambers definition](#) “an unorthodox or false religion”.

<sup>80</sup> The presenter referred to Dr Shahid Qureshi in the *London Post*, saying, “He [Dr Qureshi] says that categorically that this cult has adopted this victimhood approach”.

on topic [for example when he said] *“A little bit about the Finality of Prophethood...”* and *“we’re going to close this topic and won’t return to it”*).

Channel I said that Mr Malik’s reference to *“the plant planted by the Britons”* was “an allusion to an expression used by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad himself, in a letter to the British Lieutenant Governor, Sir William Makeworth Young, namely ‘*khud kashta pauda*’, which means ‘a self-cultivated plant’ of the British”. It added that there was “a long-standing controversy about what he was referring to when he used this expression”. In this regard, the Licensee referred to “a sermon<sup>81</sup> given in 1985 by the Fourth Caliph of the Ahmadi, Mirza Tahir Ahmad, entitled ‘Was Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama’at planted by the British?’ and arguing that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was using the expression to refer to his family rather than to the Ahmadiyya”.

Channel I said that the statements were “made by a guest in the course of a live interview, were not endorsed by the presenter and should not be regarded as placing the Programme in breach of the Code”.

#### *Criticism of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad*

Channel I said that the criticism of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad to which Ofcom’s Preliminary View had referred had “occurred within a few sentences of a single speech at [21:28]”. It refuted therefore Ofcom’s Preliminary View that the criticism was “sustained”. It said the criticism “formed part of a theological critique of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad’s claims to be the Promised Messiah and Imam Mahdi, and the consistency of those claims with Islamic scripture”. It added that the “fact that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad made these claims [was] not controversial”, and that such claims were “either right, or gravely wrong”. It said the statement *“in fact, he was dajjal and whoever claims any false claim like this, he is dajjal in the light of Hadith, Islamic beliefs”* was “theological criticism of [someone who had made] what the speaker believed to be false claims to prophethood”.

#### *Criticism of Mirza Masroor Ahmad*

Channel I said that the presenter mentioned Mirza Masroor Ahmad as part of a “survey of ‘*dissident groups*’ within the [Ahmadiyya] community”. It said he mentioned that one of these groups had alleged that Mirza Masroor Ahmad “*committed fraud*” in an “*engineered election*” to become the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community’s Caliph. It said the presenter did not endorse these allegations. It added that when the guest said that people had alleged that Mirza Masroor Ahmad had been sent to prison and added that this was for “*a charge of immoral conduct*”, the presenter “was quick to distance himself from that allegation”, saying: *“It would be part of the record but I am not aware of it at the moment”*. The Licensee said that the Preliminary View was therefore wrong to have stated that “the presenter did not seek to challenge or contextualise any of the derogatory statements made by the guest towards Ahmadi people”.

Channel I said that the presenter referred to Mirza Masroor Ahmad in respectful terms by using the title “*Sahab*” when he made an open invitation to dialogue to the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community at 18.41.

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<sup>81</sup> The [sermon](#) is reproduced on “Al Islam, The Official Website of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community”.

Channel I said, “This material cannot justify the allegation [in the Preliminary View] of ‘sustained and repeated derogatory references, without contextual justification’ to Mirza Masroor Ahmad [and the] references to him did not amount to derogatory treatment of the group he leads”.

### *Compliance arrangements*

Channel I said that the programme was closely monitored for potential breaches and that all participants had been briefed prior to the recording on “the need to observe sensitivities and refrain from inflammatory or derogatory language”. In addition, it said the participants “were told...not to say anything that could not be backed up”.

Channel I said that since the broadcast, the Licensee had “commenced an overhaul of its compliance processes, which is ongoing, and which will take account of the issues raised by the current complaint”.

### **Decision**

Reflecting our duties under the Communications Act 2003, Section Two and Three of the Code require that generally accepted standards are applied to the content of television and radio services to provide adequate protection for members of the public from the inclusion of harmful and/or offensive material, including material containing hatred, abusive and derogatory treatment of individuals, groups, religions or communities.

Ofcom has taken account of the audience’s and broadcaster’s right to freedom of expression set out in Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights (“ECHR”) when considering the Licensee’s compliance with the Code.

Ofcom has also taken account of the broadcast’s right set out in Article 9 of the ECHR to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching.

Ofcom has also had due regard<sup>82</sup> in the exercise of its functions to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, to advance equality of opportunity and to foster good relations between those who share a relevant protected characteristic, such as religion or belief, and those who do not.

Broadcasters can transmit programmes taking a critical view of a particular religion or broadcast opinions that some viewers may find offensive, and the Code does not seek to prevent followers of one religion from being able to express views rejecting or criticising people of differing views or beliefs. To do so would, in our view, be a disproportionate restriction of the broadcaster’s right to freedom of religion and freedom of expression and the audience’s right to receive information. However, when broadcasting material of this nature, broadcasters must comply with all relevant rules of the Code.

### **Rule 3.3**

Rule 3.3 states:

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<sup>82</sup> Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010.



“Material which contains abusive or derogatory treatment of individuals, groups, religions or communities, must not be included in television and radio services except where it is justified by the context”.

As stated above, the Code does not prohibit criticism of any particular religion and we agree with the Licensee that theological discussion can include the legitimate expression of an opinion that a particular text or interpretation is incorrect. We also agreed with the Licensee that it is “within the bounds of legitimate theological debate for a mainstream Muslim to argue that the claims made by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad are false, that belief in his Prophethood is wrong, heretical and inconsistent with true Islam, and that those who propagate that belief risk leading true believers astray”. However, such criticism must not spill over into abuse or derogatory treatment.

In the context of Rule 3.3, when assessing compliance with the Code, Ofcom must take into consideration the right to freedom of expression, which encompasses the broadcaster’s and audience’s right to receive material, information and ideas without interference, as well as the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion and the right to enjoyment of human rights without discrimination on grounds such as religion.

We first considered whether this programme contained abusive or derogatory treatment of individuals, groups, religions or communities.

We took into account the programme’s portrayal of the Ahmadiyya community and some of its key figures through the claims it made about them and the language it used.

#### *Allegation of “playing the victim”*

In discussions at 16:03 and 16:13, the guest and presenter said that when Ahmadi people spoke of being oppressed they were “*playing the victim*” and “*portraying victimhood and being oppressed*”, that they did this “*often*” and “*crie[d] a lot*”. The presenter continued this thesis at 17:28 arguing that although Ahmadi people complained of persecution by Pakistani people, mullahs and the Pakistani Government, it was his understanding that “*not only the Qadiani worship places...were attacked*”. He said the programme would revert later on to the question of whether the Ahmadiyya community was really facing persecution or whether the state of Pakistan was simply upholding the law of the land.

At 18:17 the presenter picked up the topic again. He said it was “*documented very well, that this was a wave of extremism and terrorism in Pakistan orchestrated by foreign agencies to destabilise Pakistan [and hence] the attacks on Sunni shrines, on Shia imambargah, the mosques [and various military, educational and commercial establishments]*”. He concluded that “*if there were certain attacks on Ahmadiyya...or Qadiani worship places that was not something specially designed to persecute Qadianis or Ahmadis*”. The guest agreed and said that India was targeting Pakistan’s minorities and was behind an attack on a “*the Qadiani worship [centre] in Lahore*”, but “*the Qadiani, here in London,*”, despite knowing this, had said “*the mullahs*” were responsible, to “*try to give wrong shape...to this attack*”. The presenter referred to Dr Shahid Qureshi in *the London Post*, saying, “*He [Dr Qureshi] says that categorically that this cult has adopted this victimhood approach because they want*

*to have political asylum, the monetary gains in Europe*<sup>83</sup>. The guest strongly agreed with this assertion. At 18:58, the presenter dismissed “*the victimhood*” and the “*idea of persecution*” again, adding that it was simply “*the law of the land [and a] crime in Pakistan for Qadianis to call their leader a prophet, or his wives as the mothers of Muslims, or their worship places as mosques*”.

Ofcom considered that the programme asserted, without challenge or context, that Ahmadi people’s claims of persecution in Pakistan was a deliberately deceptive ploy to gain sympathy and prosperity through asylum in Europe. Specifically, the presenter and guest said that, although there had been some attacks on Ahmadi people in Pakistan, this was part of a wave of terrorism perpetrated by India against a range of Pakistani institutions<sup>84</sup> and not by the Pakistani Government, Pakistani people or religious leaders. The presenter also said at 18:58 that Ahmadi people in Pakistan were not the victims of persecution through the application of laws which criminalised their religious practices.

Ofcom considered that the repeated references to Ahmadi people inaccurately portraying themselves as being victims of persecution for their own advantage amounted to abusive or derogatory treatment. It is important to note that the accusation had two elements; firstly, that the portrayal of victimhood was inaccurate, and secondly that it constituted a ploy to obtain political asylum and monetary gain. We took into account that these assertions were uncontextualised and unchallenged in the programme, despite the evidence that exists from publicly available reports of Ahmadi people facing persecution and discrimination both in Pakistan and the UK, for example as follows.

In relation to the accuracy of Ahmadi claims that the community faces persecution, we note that there have been a series of reports of specific targeting of Ahmadi communities. For example, there was a widely reported terrorist attack on Ahmadi mosques in Lahore in 2010, in which 94 people were killed and over 120 people injured, and for which a Punjab provincial chapter of the Pakistani Taliban took responsibility. Human Rights Watch reported that this attack took place after the “anti-Ahmadiyya campaign [had] intensified...exemplified by the government allowing groups to place banners seeking the death of ‘Qadianis’ (a derogatory term for Ahmadis) on the main thoroughfares of Lahore”<sup>85</sup>. Another example of an attack on an Ahmadi mosque in Lahore took the form of a mobbing in 2016<sup>86</sup>. As set out at footnotes 2, 3, 85, 86, 90 to 95 and 98, targeting of members of the Ahmadiyya community both in Pakistan and in the UK is well-documented, and information about the discrimination the community experiences can be found in publicly available reports.

The programme went further, asserting that the Ahmadiyya community “*adopted this victimhood approach because they want to have political asylum, the monetary gains in Europe*”. We considered

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<sup>83</sup> Our Preliminary View paraphrased this as a “cult of victimhood” but we accept the point made by the Licensee that this precise phrase was not used.

<sup>84</sup> The contributors blamed India for attacks on Sunni shrines, on Shia imambargah, mosques, various military, educational and commercial establishments and Ahmadi mosques in Lahore.

<sup>85</sup> See [Pakistan: Massacre of Minority Ahmadis](#), Human Rights Watch, 1 June 2010.

<sup>86</sup> See [Militants attack two Ahmadi mosques in Pakistan; 80 killed](#), The Washington Post, 29 May 2010.

the implication that Ahmadi claims were not merely inaccurate but a dishonest ploy to obtain financial or political gain to be highly derogatory towards the community as a whole.

*Allegation that the Ahmadiyya community is a “fitnah”, “dajjali fitnah” and “dajjal”*

During this 12-hour programme, the Ahmadiyya community was repeatedly described as a “fitnah”, “dajjal” and “dajjali fitnah”. In its representations, the Licensee argued that these terms can be translated and understood in slightly different ways and, although the programme offered a critique of aspects of the Ahmadi belief system, the specific terms were not used in a derogatory way in the context of the programme.

Broadcasters may transmit programmes taking a critical view of a particular religion or broadcasting opinions that some viewers may find offensive, and the Code does not seek to prevent followers of one religion from being able to express views rejecting or criticising others’ views or beliefs. To do so would, in our view, be a disproportionate restriction of the broadcaster’s right to freedom of expression and the audience’s right to receive information. However, when doing so, broadcasters must ensure the material complies with the provisions in the Code for adequate protection of members of the public from the inclusion of harmful or offensive material.

Ofcom acknowledges that the terms used can be translated and used in different ways, and whether or not they constitute abusive or derogatory treatment depends on the context in which they are used. In light of that, we considered how the terms in question were used in the programme.

**“Fitnah”**

Ofcom acknowledged that, in Qur’anic usage, the word “fitnah” has several meanings, including, for example: a trial, treachery or disorder. Ofcom noted that the Licensee itself accepted the Oxford Islamic Studies definition which says that the term is generally negative.

We considered the Licensee’s argument that the words “fitnah” and “dajjali fitnah” were used as a reference to disunity in a religious sense as opposed to social or political. The presenter and guest referred to and discussed various Ahmadi scriptures to examine the claims that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad allegedly made about several Islamic prophets and the claims he allegedly made of being “*Krishna...God, Mahdi and Messiah too*”. Ofcom accepted that such religious discourse formed part of the contributors’ reasoning for calling Ahmadi scripture “*fitnah*”, given that at 15:18 the guest said that he would refer to one of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad’s books to “*let you the viewers decide why I call it fitnah*”.

While some viewers may esteem Mirza Ghulam Ahmad’s writings and therefore find this view offensive, we considered that it was a form of religious expression which the Code does not seek to prevent. To prevent it, in our view, be a disproportionate restriction of the broadcaster’s right to freedom of expression and the audience’s right to receive information.

We then considered the use of the term to describe the Ahmadiyya community itself. We took into account that the first use of “fitnah” in the content was to characterise the Ahmadiyya community as uniquely being a fitnah (“[15:13] “*...there is only one fitnah, called Qadiani*”). Ofcom considered that viewers would understand that the programme was using the word in a special way to single out the Ahmadiyya community. This happened in conjunction with the start of a thesis developed within the programme that the Ahmadiyya community was an enemy from within Pakistan (“*The background of*

*this fitnah actually...*). As part of this thesis, serious allegations were made against the Ahmadiyya community. For example, it was said that the Ahmadiyya community was specifically created and continued to be used by Western nations to exert influence in Pakistan which in turn poses a threat to both Islamic beliefs, and to Pakistan as a Muslim nation. Ofcom considered that these were inflammatory allegations about the very essence of the Ahmadiyya community, not only at its origin but also through to the present day. For example, Mr Malik said that the British Government had chosen Mirza Ghulam Ahmad to alter Islamic religious belief in a major way as part of its *“abrasive attacks on Islam”* [15:18] and Ahmadi people were the *“creation”* of the British and used to *“stab the Muslims in the back”*. Also, the presenter and guest talked about the Ahmadiyya community as a national security threat to Pakistan.

Ofcom therefore considered that in context, *“fitnah”*, when used to describe the Ahmadiyya community itself, was used pejoratively to single out the community as a cause of religious and political disorder within Pakistan and a danger to the state and to the faith of Islam. We considered therefore that its application to the Ahmadiyya community in this programme exceeded purely theological discourse and was part of an abusive portrayal of the community in which its claims of being oppressed were turned against it and formed into an accusation of treachery in which it was accused of being an enemy of Pakistan from within.

#### **“Dajjal” and “dajjali fitnah”**

The Licensee argued that these terms were not used in a derogatory manner to imply *“a manifestation of evil”* or to refer to *“al-Dajjal”*. Instead, they were a broader reference to *“a false prophet, or one who deceives, including through false religious teaching”* and as such constituted a criticism of a belief system, but not abuse or derogatory treatment towards its adherents. The Licensee also stated that Mr Malik did not mean to define *“dajjali fitnah”* as *“a manifestation of evil”*.

Ofcom accepted that terms like *“Dajjal”* and *“dajjali fitnah”* may be used to describe a particular belief or religious teaching as part of *“robust expression of theological disagreement”*, without being abusive or derogatory. However, Ofcom did not consider the terms were used in this way, within the context of the programme.

In the first place, the term was used to describe not just Ahmadi beliefs, but the Ahmadiyya community as a whole – one cleric referred to it as a *“group of dajjal”* [18:08].

In the second place, we took into account the exchange between the presenter and Mr Malik in which the phrase *“a manifestation of evil”* was used.

Samiullah Malik: *“Such as dajjal came before Imam Mahdi, isn’t it?”*

The presenter: *“No, no. Dajjal will be afterwards”.*

Samiullah Malik: *“No, no, no. I’m asking whether the Qadian are dajjal. Qadians are also one of dajjal. Qadian, I’m not talking of that instance of Dajjal, [In Urdu] I am talking about this dajjal being a manifestation of evil. [Reverting to English] I mean, that meaning I’m not talking about that one. This is also dajjali fitnah this one – ”.*

The presenter: *“No this is dajjali fitnah, that is something different. What I’m saying is Dajjal which has been mentioned in – ”.*

Samiullah Malik: *“No, no I’m not talking for that one – ”.*

The presenter: *“Real, that Dajjal [In Urdu] dajjal is a fairly common Arabic word which is used to describe a false prophet. If you say Ad-Dajjal you are referring to the false prophet who will appear at the end of times according to Islamic eschatology. [Reverting to English] That Dajjal is going to come afterwards...”.*

In our view, Mr Malik was referring to the Ahmadiyya community as one of the 30 false prophets that would precede the Al-Dajjal<sup>87</sup> and as a manifestation of evil that would culminate in the ultimate deception of Al-Dajjal. Ofcom therefore considered that Mr Malik’s use of the term “*dajjali fitnah*” exceeded describing the Ahmadiyya community as heretical and characterised them as satanic. We considered this to be particularly derogatory and a form of abuse.

We considered the Licensee’s concern of “cross-cultural misunderstanding” and its reference to a statement in ‘Islam for Dummies’ which states that, in Islam, “...Iblis/Satan doesn’t assume the same importance [as] in Christianity”. Ofcom agreed that there are differences in understandings of what it means to be “satanic” both within and between Abrahamic religions. However, notwithstanding these differences, we considered that Mr Malik’s statements were abusive in that they were tantamount to calling the Ahmadiyya community one of the “30 dajjals”, which as the Licensee explained, are those falsely claiming to be a prophet, of whom the last would be the Al-Dajjal, who is clearly regarded in Islamic teaching (to which the Ahmadiyya community also subscribes) as a powerful figure whose deception is to be avoided at all cost<sup>88</sup>.

We accepted the Licensee’s position that Mr Malik did not intend to describe the Ahmadiyya community as “a manifestation of evil”. But we considered that in the programme, he nevertheless did so. In our view, this went beyond criticism of the religious beliefs of the Ahmadiyya community, and beyond theological explanation of the way in which the speaker’s version of Islam sees the emergence of different beliefs, to abuse of the community itself.

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<sup>87</sup> See footnote 75.

<sup>88</sup> The Oxford Islamic Studies Online [definition of al-Dajjal](#) is given under its [definition for the Antichrist](#). This states: “Antichrist. Known as Dajjal (the deceiver). Supposed to appear during the age of injustice preceding the end of the world, causing corruption and oppression to sweep over the earth for a period of either forty days or forty years. Appearance is one of the sure signs of the last days. Will deceive many by false teachings and miracles, bringing with him food and water to tempt those who have been suffering. Not mentioned in the Quran, but prominent in hadith and later Islamic literature. Correlates to Christian apocalyptic legends about the Antichrist. Medieval Christians often portrayed Muhammad as the Antichrist. Many evangelical Christians today portray Muslims as agents of the Antichrist”. Ofcom understands that “dajjal” can be used to refer to people or beliefs that are considered to exhibit characteristics of al-Dajjal such as deception, misguidance and false-prophethood and that it can be used as an offensive descriptor, equivalent to the term “antichrist” or “antichrist-like”. The Licensee said that dajjal, when not referring to Al-Dajjal, denoted a false prophet, or one who deceives, including through false religious teaching.

### *Denigration of a key figure of the Ahmadiyya community*

The presenter said that one of the “*dissident groups among Qadianis*” had said that in relation to Mirza Masroor Ahmad, the current leader of the worldwide Ahmadiyya community, that his “*election to the office of Caliph was an engineered election, he committed fraud*” and his guest replied that Mirza Masroor Ahmad was imprisoned for a “*charge of immoral conduct*”. Neither within the programme or its representations did the licensee offer any proof or justification for these allegations. In the absence of such, Ofcom considered that they appeared to be baseless and therefore denigrated Mirza Ghulam Ahmad.

The Code does not prohibit criticism of the founder or leader of any religion, or any other venerated persons associated with particular religions. However, derogatory references without contextual justification and unsubstantiated allegations regarding such persons may constitute derogatory treatment of the religious group with which they are associated. Although the denigration of Mirza Masroor Ahmad was relatively brief, we considered that the strength of the allegations made, particularly the unsubstantiated reference to immoral conduct, in combination with other aspects of the programme as outlined above, contributed to the abuse of the Ahmadiyya community in the programme.

We accepted the presenter said: “It would be part of the record but I am not aware of it at the moment”. However, we did not consider this amounted to a challenge to the statement.

### *Use of the word “cult”*

We accepted the Licensee’s argument that use of the word “*cult*” in the programme, in the specific context in which it was used, did not in itself cross the line from criticism to abuse.

### *Use of the word “Qadiani”*

Throughout the programme, the presenter and speakers referred to the Ahmadiyya community as “Qadiani”.

The term “Qadiani” is derived from the word “Qadian” a town in northern India which was the birthplace of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the founder of the Ahmadiyya movement. Originally the term only referred to residents of the town Qadian, and in Urdu language means “from Qadian”. It is a common custom in the Indian sub-continent for an individual to add to their names their community, caste or town of origin.

The Ahmadiyya movement split into two factions in the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century over questions of leadership. The smaller Lahori branch began in Lahore and continues to be headquartered there. The larger branch, called the Ahmadis, also took the name Qadiani after the birthplace Ghulam Ahmad to distinguish itself from Lahori Ahmadis. After the partition in 1947 of Pakistan and India, Ahmadis moved their religious headquarters from Qadian in India to Rabwah in Pakistan. Following the Pakistani Government’s decision to declare both branches non-Muslims in 1974 and later prohibiting them from propagating their faith, the larger branch moved its headquarters to the UK. Our understanding is that the vast majority of Ahmadis today are not born in Qadian. According to the

community, because most Ahmadis today are not born in Qadian, the practice of adding the term Qadiani to their names or referring to themselves as Qadianis has died out<sup>89</sup>.

However, the term “Qadiani” continues to be used by some of those outside the Ahmadiyya community despite its practice and preference of using the term “Ahmadi”. Ofcom understands that the reasons for this continued use of the term Qadiani include to distinguish between the two branches of the Ahmadiyya community, habitude and an unwillingness to use the term Ahmadi both on religious grounds (as explained below) and in some cases out of animosity towards the community<sup>90</sup>. Scholars<sup>91</sup>, academics<sup>92</sup>, <sup>93</sup> and human rights organizations<sup>94</sup> have acknowledged that the term Qadiani has developed a negative connotation over the years and they consider it to be a pejorative insult for members of Ahmadiyya community. A 2017 US State Department “Report on International Religious Freedom: Pakistan,” states that the term Qadiani is “a pejorative term for Ahmadi Muslims”<sup>95</sup>. We noted that the presenter himself recognised in the programme that he was using a term the community regards as derogatory.

We accepted that the term is used in official Pakistani documents. However, we do not accept that it follows that it may always be used generally for UK audiences when referring to Ahmadis, given that (as the presenter of the programme himself acknowledged<sup>96</sup>), the community itself considers it pejorative.

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<sup>89</sup> Wade, Rory, [Is anti-Ahmadiyya discrimination an issue in the British Muslim community?](#)

<sup>90</sup> “[Pakistan, Land of the Intolerant](#)”, The New York Times, 19 October 2017, Karachi, Pakistan: “We [people in Pakistan] prefer to call the Ahmadis ‘Qadianis,’ meaning from Qadian. Ahmadis consider the word derogatory, which is why we use it”.

<sup>91</sup> Qasmi, Ali Usman, “[The Ahmadis and the Politics of Religious Exclusion in Pakistan](#)”, Anthem Press (2015) pg.2 “[Ahmadis] are referred to...pejoratively as...Qadianis”.

<sup>92</sup> Saeed, Sadia, “[Pakistani Nationalism and the State Marginalisation of the Ahmadiyya Community in Pakistan](#)”, pg. 135: “In popular mainstream narratives, however, such internal distinctions [between Ahmadis and Lahori Ahmadis] are often overlooked and all Ahmadis collectively referred to as Mirzais (followers of Mirza) or Qadianis (from Qadian), words that have over time taken on intensely derogatory connotations”.

<sup>93</sup> Anne Morvant Elmer Distinguished Professor of Religious Studies at Loyola University, New Orleans, US, Adil Hussain Khan, author of “From Sufism to Ahmadiyya: A Muslim Minority Movement in South Asia,” Indiana University Press (2015) says in his doctoral dissertation “[Mirza Ghulam Ahmad and the Construction of the Ahmadiyya Identity](#)” at pg.111 that “The term ‘Qadiani’ has developed a negative connotation and is often used in the pejorative in a derogatory tone to insult members of Jama’al-i Ahmadiyya. The followers of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad refer to themselves as ‘Ahmadis’. In this context, the term ‘Qadiani’ is only being used to distinguish the followers of Mirza Mahmud Ahmad who remained in Qadian from the followers of Muhammad ‘A li who migrated to Lahore and called themselves ‘Lahoris’”.

<sup>94</sup> “[Pakistan: Massacre of Minority Ahmadis; Attack on Hospital Treating Victims Shows How State Inaction Emboldens Extremists](#)”, Human Rights Watch, 1 June 2010.

<sup>95</sup> [Executive Summary, 2017 Report on International Religious Freedom: Pakistan](#), U.S. Department of State.

<sup>96</sup> The presenter said: “they [Ahmadi people] say: ‘Don’t call me a Qadiani; it’s a derogatory remark’”.

The Licensee argued that, while the word “Qadiani” is seen as derogatory by many Ahmadis, it was used in the programme to distinguish between different Ahmadiyya communities in a way that was relevant due to the differences in the belief systems of the Qadiani and Lahorite branches.

The Licensee also explained that some Muslims do not consider it appropriate to use the terms “Ahmadi” and “Ahmadiyya” to refer to this community because the names themselves imply a link, which they dispute, to the Prophet Muhammad. Within the programme, Mr Malik stated that he would always call Ahmadi people “Qadiani” because the word “Ahmadiyya” was derived from another name for the Prophet Muhammad. We took into account that the term can be highly emotive when used in the context of denying that the Ahmadiyya community’s view that its beliefs are a form of Islamic faith. Ofcom is aware that, while Ahmadi people clearly self-identify their faith as a form of Islam, some Muslim people believe strongly that it is necessary to clearly disassociate Ahmadi beliefs from Islam. While some viewers may therefore find Mr Malik’s aforementioned use of the term “Qadiani” for this purpose offensive, the Code does not seek to prevent such forms of religious expression, as to do so would, in our view, be a disproportionate restriction of the broadcaster’s right to freedom of expression and the audience’s right to receive information.

We accepted that the term “Qadiani” can be used without being derogatory, an example in our view being when the presenter called the founder of the Ahmadiyya community “*Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Qadiani*”. That is because, as previously noted, it is a common practice in South Asia to add where a person comes from to the end of their name.

We also accepted the Licensee’s argument that the word can, in some contexts, also be used to distinguish between groups within the Ahmadiyya community. This was the case when the presenter distinguished between “*the Qadiani group, their headquarters are in London*” and “*a Lahori group with headquarters in Lahore*”. Ofcom considered that such differentiation was not in itself pejorative.

In this context, we carefully considered the following dialogue:

Samiullah Malik: *“I think we must, from now onwards, call them as Qadiani...they want to call [themselves] Ahmadiyya...I will always call them Qadiani”.*

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The presenter: *“They used to be very proud of being called Qadianis but now they are running away from the word Qadiani and they are calling themselves Ahmadiyya, for a reason. Because people know what Qadianism is, people know what Qadianis are, what their beliefs are. So, it’s just kind of running away from their reality and calling themselves Ahmadiyya”.*

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The presenter: *“Why are they so embarrassed at being called Qadiani that they say: ‘Don’t call me a Qadiani; it’s a derogatory remark’”.*



We considered that, in these insistences on using the term, the presenter and guest demonstrated that they understood that it would be considered derogatory and offensive by the Ahmadiyya community. However, the presenter and guest explained within the programme that it was their belief that it was necessary to use the term to distinguish the two branches of the Ahmadiyya community and to differentiate Ahmadi and orthodox Islamic beliefs. We therefore considered that, although provocative and spoken from the perspective of dismissing Ahmadi beliefs, and likely to be offensive to members of the Ahmadiyya community, these uses of “Qadiani” were not in themselves abusive, but rather an expression of the speakers’ faith. In reaching this conclusion, we also took into account that the presenters did not speak in an aggressive manner.

It is Ofcom’s conclusion, therefore, that use of the word “Qadiani” can be highly contentious and liable to cause offence because of the way in which its meaning has evolved over the years. However, depending on the context, it is sometimes used to distinguish groups within the Ahmadiyya community, or as a form of criticism that does not spill over into being abusive of the Ahmadiyya community<sup>97</sup>. In this case, on balance, we did not consider that use of the word “Qadiani” was abusive in itself.

### Context

We next considered whether or not there was sufficient context to justify the broadcast of the abusive and derogatory treatment as described above, i.e. the allegation of “*playing the victim*”, the allegation that the Ahmadiyya community is a “*fitnah*”, “*dajjali fitnah*” and “*dajjal*”, and the denigration of a key figure of the Ahmadiyya community.

The Code states that contextual factors relevant to Rule 3.3 of the Code may include, but are not limited to:

- the genre and editorial content of the programme;
- the extent to which sufficient challenge is provided;
- the status of anyone featured in the material; and,
- the service on which the programme is broadcast and the likely size and expectations of the audience.

We considered whether these or any other contextual factors were relevant to this case.

Iqra TV is a channel delivering general entertainment content to the Muslim community in the UK. Ofcom recognised that regular viewers of Iqra TV may have expected a programme discussing topical religious issues relevant to the Muslim community. The decision taken by the Pakistan National Assembly to amend the constitution on 7 September 1974 was clearly a legitimate topic for discussion, particularly on the anniversary of the change. It is within the broadcaster’s rights to freedom of expression to discuss theological matters and to criticise and challenge Ahmadi beliefs, and this was related to the historical reasons for the constitutional amendment and continuing relevance to Pakistan.

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<sup>97</sup> We acknowledge the use of language and how audiences perceive potentially offensive words in relation to generally accepted standards for broadcasting develops over time. Ofcom is in the process of commissioning new research into offensive language, including racially offensive terms, and will publish its findings next year.

However, Rule 3.3 is clear that individuals, groups, religions or communities must not be subject to uncontextualised abusive or derogatory treatment. In our view, the fact that this was a legitimate subject for the programme to explore did not justify the inclusion of derogatory content towards the Ahmadiyya community within the discussion. We did not consider there was any editorial justification for the broadcast of these derogatory statements.

We took into account that the programme lasted approximately 12 hours and the abusive and derogatory comments were dispersed throughout the second half of the programme. However, we did not consider the fact that the statements were dispersed over several hours justified the abuse directed towards the Ahmadiyya community. Moreover, we took into account that the abusive portrayal of Ahmadiyya community as having lied about the persecution it has suffered and of having adopted a “*victimhood approach*” occurred across three consecutive hours of the programme and that overlapping this, the portrayal of the Ahmadiyya community as an enemy within Pakistan occurred across four consecutive hours.

Further, there was limited material broadcast during this programme that provided any challenge to or criticism of the abusive and derogatory statements about the Ahmadiyya community. We took into account that the presenter and founder of Iqra TV expressed that they were against the propagation of abuse and hatred towards the Ahmadiyya community and invited Ahmadis to discuss any issues with them. For example, when explaining his belief that Ahmadi persecution was based on false claims, the presenter said:

*“The end of prophethood is a faith. Creating awareness of this faith is not a crime anywhere. It is freedom of speech. However, if there is hate speech going on somewhere, it should be stopped. We are against it. If someone is spreading extremism and terrorism, we are with the Government on it, in stopping it”.*

When discussing former Ahmadis who had converted to Islam, the presenter said, with the agreement of his guest:

*“...my humble request to our Qadiani and Ahmadi friends is please look at the literature. We are not against you, we are not anti-Qadiani or anti-Ahmadiyya. We are just pro-Khatme Nabuwwat to propagate and to create awareness with regards to the aqidah Khatme Nabuwwat, the belief of finality of prophethood. We love you, we respect you, and we want you to just look at it at your leisure. If you have any questions, please come and speak to [us]. Even your Khalifah, Mirza Masroor Sahab, we welcome him to have a debate anytime, wherever he chooses. So it is dialogue, let’s just sit down and talk about it if you have an issue. We do not promote extremism, we do not promote terrorism...So, it is not something we should be taking this propaganda of Qadianis that whoever talks about Khatme Nabuwwat, they are extremists and terrorists”.*

During his closing remarks the founder of Iqra TV, Imam Qasim Rashid Ahmad said:

*“We should not do a programme to spread dissent and against religion. Our programming today was about educating and teaching Muslims. No one was abused, nor anyone insulted...If followers of any Qadiani religion think that our voice should reach to Iqra TV, then I give you an open invitation to come and sit and have a discussion with our religious scholars”.*

We acknowledge that the statement of opposition to hate speech had some relevance and note that we investigated in relation to Rules 2.3 and 3.3 rather than Rule 3.2 which relates to hate speech. However, we considered that these comments lacked credibility given the content of the programme as described above. We considered therefore that they did not sufficiently mitigate the abusive and derogatory statements made by the presenter and guests. In particular, they did not challenge the specific allegations constituting abusive and derogatory treatment as set out above. Additionally, although the presenter and founder of Iqra TV invited views from the Ahmadiyya community, this was made as a general invitation to appear at some unspecified future date, rather than providing challenge to the abuse or ensure contrary views were presented during the programme itself. Ofcom did not consider that these statements provided sufficient challenge or context to the abusive and derogatory statements made by the presenter and guests in the programme.

To some extent, Ofcom accepted the Licensee’s representations that much of the extended programme was a theological and historical discussion of Ahmadi beliefs and the background to the constitutional amendment in 1974. As noted above, these were legitimate subjects to cover. However, we considered that some of the comments about Ahmadi people in the programme went far beyond a theological and historical discussion about the Ahmadiyya community. That is, the discussion went well beyond describing historical context to events in 1974 or the reasons why those holding certain beliefs were and are considered by many orthodox Muslims to be non-Muslims, and extended to abusive and derogatory treatment of the community in current times. The Licensee stated that in calling the Ahmadiyya community *“a group of dajjal”*, the cleric was quoting words spoken in 1974. Ofcom considered that the fact the words were originally spoken over four decades ago served little to diminish the offensiveness of describing Ahmadi people as a group of being antichrist-like (see footnote 88) because the cleric was quoting himself and commending his words to the viewers of the programme.

Ofcom acknowledged that viewers may have been aware of the presenter and guests’ stance on the finality of prophethood. However, we were particularly concerned that Toaha Qureshi, the presenter of this programme, was responsible for voicing abusive and pejorative statements towards the Ahmadiyya community. In our view, the authority which Toaha Qureshi carried as the presenter of the programme compounded the harmful effect of his abusive and derogatory statements. We also took into account that he elevated Mr Malik’s position to that of an authority figure by describing him as an expert on finality of prophethood and stating that he had written books on whether the *“Ahmadi group”* was a *“threat”* to Pakistan’s national security. We considered that this would have given Mr Malik’s statements greater weight and authority. Further, the presenter rarely challenged or contextualised any of the derogatory statements made by the guest towards Ahmadi people. Although the presenter asked his guest to *“put history aside”* and focus instead on theology, the subsequent discussions continued to portray Ahmadi people as an enemy within Pakistan and to deny the

persecution that they face. As set out above, Ofcom took into account that the presenter distanced himself from his guest's allegation that Mirza Masroor Ahmad was imprisoned on a charge of immoral conduct (*"It would be part of the record but I am not aware of it at the moment"*). In our view this was a weak form of challenge given that Mr Qureshi couched it terms of his own lack of awareness of events and did not challenge his guest to offer evidence for the allegation.

We also took into account that at points the presenter and guest used phrases like *"Qadiani friends"*, *"our Qadiani community"* and said that the programme was *"not anti-Qadiani"* and *"not about opposing the Qadianis or Qadianism"*, but about promoting belief in the finality of prophethood. The presenter also said that he sympathised with Ahmadi people as he considered that they had been deceived and misled in their religious belief, and he occasionally used a respectful term to talk about Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (*"Mirza Sahab"*). However, we considered these references to friendship and the purpose of programme carried little meaning given the abuse of Ahmadi people that took place in the programme.

Therefore, for the reasons we have set out above, we considered that this content included abusive and derogatory statements about the Ahmadiyya community, that were not justified by the context. We therefore found the programme in breach of Rule 3.3 of the Code.

### Rule 2.3

Rule 2.3 of the Code requires that:

"In applying generally accepted standards broadcasters must ensure that material which may cause offence is justified by the context. Such material may include, but is not limited to, offensive language...humiliation, distress, violation of human dignity, discriminatory treatment or language (for example on the grounds of...religion...)"

We first considered whether the material in these programmes had the potential to cause offence. For the reasons set out above under Rule 3.3, we considered that the content in this programme amounted to abusive and derogatory language towards members of the Ahmadiyya community and their beliefs, which by its nature was discriminatory on the grounds of religion. It also denied the extensively reported persecution of Ahmadi people from within Pakistan. We considered that denial of this persecution had the potential to be highly offensive to viewers. We took the view therefore that this content would have been highly offensive and distressing both to Ahmadi people who were watching and to others who do not share the abusive and derogatory views about the Ahmadiyya community that were expressed in the programme.

We then went on to consider whether the broadcast of this potentially offensive material was justified by the context. Context is assessed by reference to a range of factors including: the service on which the material was broadcast; the editorial content of the programme; likely audience expectations; warnings given to viewers; and the effect on viewers who may come across the material unawares.

As discussed above, Iqra TV is a general entertainment channel broadcasting religious content to the Muslim community in the UK. We acknowledged that regular viewers may have been likely to expect a discussion of topical issues relevant to that community. The decision taken by the Pakistan National

Assembly on 7 September 1974 to amend the constitution was clearly a legitimate topic for a programme to explore. However, this programme contained potentially highly offensive material towards members of the Ahmadiyya community.

While audiences may have expected more challenging material in a programme which discussed contentious issues facing the Muslim community, we considered the abusive nature of this content towards Ahmadi people would have exceeded audience expectations. We considered that this would particularly have been the case given that this programme was made in the UK for a British audience, and given the shock that persecution of Ahmadi people has caused in the UK<sup>98</sup>; and the results of our recent research, [Audience expectations in a digital world](#). In this research, people told us that discriminatory content against specific groups is more concerning than other offensive content.

As set out above we took into account the length of the programme and that some of the statements were dispersed throughout it. However, we did not consider that the dispersal of these statements throughout the programme mitigated their potential to be highly offensive. Also, we considered that the statements which portrayed the Ahmadiyya community as an enemy within Pakistan and denied that that community was persecuted in Pakistan were sufficient in number and concentration within three to four consecutive hours of the programme to have formed a cumulative narrative within the programme.

Further, there was no material broadcast before or after this segment that provided any warning for viewers about the statements made by the presenter and his guests. Although the presenter and founder of Iqra TV voiced some disapproval of discrimination towards the Ahmadiyya community and invited Ahmadi leaders to debate them, we considered for reasons already explained above that these statements did not sufficiently mitigate the high levels of potential offence.

Given the strength of the material and our assessment of the relevant contextual factors, it was Ofcom's view that the channel's audience was unlikely to have expected to view content of this type broadcast without sufficient contextual justification or appropriate information to avoid or minimise the level of potential offence.

Our Decision is therefore that Rule 2.3 was also breached.

### **Breach of Rules 2.3 and 3.3**

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<sup>98</sup> See for example:

- [Suffocation of the Faithful, The Persecution of Ahmadi Muslims in Pakistan and the Rise of International Extremism](#), July 2020.
- [When minarets fall in Pakistani town, UK diaspora feels shock](#), Reuters, 24 July 2012.