

OPUS2

Manchester Arena Inquiry

Day 172

November 24, 2021

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1 Wednesday, 24 November 2021
 2 (9.30 am)
 3 (Delay in proceedings)
 4 (9.55 am)
 5 Housekeeping
 6 MR GREANEY: Sir, good morning. The witness in the witness
 7 box is Mr Mohammed Saeed El-Saeiti, about whom we heard
 8 a good deal yesterday. I apologise for the fact that we
 9 are starting late, there's been a considerable amount to
 10 deal with.
 11 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: No, I have heard that and it is what you
 12 would describe as for perfectly good reasons.
 13 MR GREANEY: There are perfectly good reasons. Could
 14 I mention two matters which are connected with what
 15 I've just said.
 16 First of all, during the course of the evidence of
 17 Mr El-Saeiti, there is a particular individual who he is
 18 reluctant to name. He will describe what that
 19 individual did, but he will not name that person, he
 20 will refer to him as X.
 21 There will thereafter, as the witness knows, be
 22 a restricted session during the course of which we
 23 expect that he will name that person -- indeed, he has
 24 named that person in a witness statement -- and you will
 25 then receive submissions from various parties about the

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1 way in which you ought to address that issue.
 2 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.
 3 MR GREANEY: We hope that seems acceptable.
 4 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Yes. Does anyone have any complaints
 5 about that particular procedure?
 6 MR COOPER: None at all. Thank you very much.
 7 MR GREANEY: Thank you very much to you. I know
 8 Mr de la Poer has told Mr Gardham, who is here from the
 9 press, about the proposal.
 10 The second issue is that earlier this morning, the
 11 representatives of the witness disclosed to the inquiry
 12 legal team a document that we regard as being of
 13 significant importance. It is a document that is in
 14 your possession. It's in the witness's possession.
 15 He is entirely content that it should be adduced. It is
 16 a document that was in the possession of the mosque, but
 17 they have not produced it to you.
 18 The fact that we now have it has been drawn to the
 19 attention of the mosque. They've indicated that they
 20 object to the document being adduced. By the stage they
 21 indicated that, it had already been disclosed to all
 22 core participants.
 23 In any event, sir, bearing in mind that you have it,
 24 it would be entirely appropriate that it should be
 25 adduced and we will do so.

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1 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.
 2 MR GREANEY: So that is the position. Having said all of
 3 that in front of Mr El-Saeiti, I will ask, please, that
 4 he be sworn.
 5 MR MOHAMMED EL-SAEITI (sworn)
 6 Questions from MR GREANEY
 7 MR GREANEY: Would you tell us your full name, please?
 8 A. Mohammed Saeed El-Saeiti.
 9 Q. Were you born in Benghazi in Libya?
 10 A. Yes, sir.
 11 Q. Did you have an opportunity to view, either at the time
 12 or afterwards, the evidence that Mr Haffar, a trustee of
 13 the Didsbury Mosque, gave yesterday?
 14 A. I had the opportunity to review the notes written by my
 15 barrister, but not the actual -- I just watched part of
 16 it -- parts of it only.
 17 Q. You have seen parts of it.
 18 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Can you all hear at the back? Thank
 19 you.
 20 Would you mind moving your chair slightly forward?
 21 Thank you. I don't want you to have to talk
 22 uncomfortably loudly, but if you'd mind keeping your
 23 voice up a bit, that would be helpful to me anyway.
 24 A. Okay.
 25 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.

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1 MR GREANEY: Are you aware that Mr Haffar told the inquiry
 2 yesterday -- this is transcript page 88, day 171
 3 {Day171/88:1} -- that your father was a diplomat for
 4 Gaddafi? Did you know that he'd said that?
 5 A. Yes, I know.
 6 Q. Did you know that he had said, and this is his language,
 7 not mine, that you belong to a particular tribe? Did
 8 you know he'd said that about you?
 9 A. I know, yes.
 10 Q. And do you know that he later appeared to suggest that
 11 you had been a supporter of the Russian support of the
 12 Assad regime in Syria?
 13 A. No.
 14 Q. You didn't know he'd said that?
 15 A. No, not at all.
 16 Q. Against that background, there are just some preliminary
 17 questions I need to ask about you, and I hope that
 18 you'll bear with me. First of all, was your father
 19 a diplomat for Gaddafi?
 20 A. My father was a diplomat. He was one of the founders of
 21 the foreign ministry in Libya, so he started his work
 22 during the reign of the Kingdom before Gaddafi came to
 23 power, so he's an old diplomat.
 24 Q. He started as a diplomat before Gaddafi's rise to power.
 25 Did he remain in post after Gaddafi --

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1 A. He had many issues in his job because he was not loyal
 2 to Gaddafi.
 3 Q. Is it reasonable to suggest, as Mr Haffar suggested,
 4 that you are a member of a "particular tribe" in Libya?
 5 A. That's --- I mean, all Libyans are members of tribes.
 6 El-Saeiti is the name of my tribe. So normally, Libyans
 7 they have their first name, father's name, and the
 8 tribe's name. Most Libyans are like that.
 9 Q. Between 2014 and 2017, as appeared to be suggested, were
 10 you a supporter of Gaddafi and/or his ideas?
 11 A. No, that's not true. I came to the UK as an asylum
 12 seeker. I got my indefinite leave to remain in 2009.
 13 I was unable to go back to Libya until the end of
 14 Gaddafi's regime. So I was against Gaddafi, and even
 15 everyone knows this.
 16 Q. You have probably answered this question in a roundabout
 17 way already, but nonetheless I'll seek your direct
 18 answer. Were you a supporter of the Russian
 19 intervention in support of Assad in Syria?
 20 A. Not at all, no. I never --- I never expressed that, no.
 21 It's not my opinion.
 22 Q. I'm sure you'll understand why it was important that
 23 I should secure your evidence in response to what
 24 Mr Haffar said.
 25 Just a little bit more about you in terms of

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1 background. Do you hold a bachelor's degree in Islamic
 2 studies from the University of Madinah in Saudi Arabia?
 3 A. Yes, I do, sir.
 4 Q. And a masters degree in theology from the University of
 5 Middlesex?
 6 A. Yes, sir.
 7 Q. Were you employed for a period of more than 10 years by
 8 the Manchester Islamic Centre, otherwise known as
 9 Didsbury Mosque ---
 10 A. Yes.
 11 Q. --- as an imam?
 12 A. Yes, sir.
 13 Q. What did that role involve so far as you were concerned?
 14 A. My role was to run the Sharia department, like all the
 15 religious needs of the community ---
 16 Q. Yes.
 17 A. --- like religious contracts, mediations, marriages,
 18 divorces, consultations, as well as preaching as well.
 19 Q. So we're going to hear about one particular sermon that
 20 you gave, but did you regularly deliver the sermon
 21 at the mosque?
 22 A. Yes, it was part of my job description, sir.
 23 Q. Was it something you did on a daily, weekly or less
 24 frequent basis?
 25 A. In the first year, I was doing maybe once a month, but

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1 then from 2011 until I left, until 2018, I was doing
 2 half of the sermons.
 3 Q. So it was therefore something that you were doing on
 4 a very regular basis?
 5 A. Very regular, yes, sir.
 6 Q. Have you now left your position at Didsbury Mosque?
 7 A. Yes. Yes, sir.
 8 Q. When did you leave?
 9 A. I left --- my last employment date was 31 July 2020.
 10 Q. As you will appreciate, the chairman, I am certain, will
 11 not want to get into matters of employment dispute, save
 12 to the extent that they are relevant to us. But can you
 13 describe in just a few sentences the circumstances in
 14 which your employment with the mosque finished?
 15 A. I mean, they decided to end my employment when I raised
 16 the issue of the witness statement to the inquiry. So
 17 two months before that, they suggested a plan to improve
 18 the work, they sent it to me in writing, and that plan
 19 includes me keeping my job and employing more imams in
 20 my department under my supervision. And then after
 21 I raised the issue about the statement, then the plan
 22 changed and then they said, "We are restructuring now
 23 and you have to leave".
 24 Q. So as you've described in your own witness statements,
 25 the mosque made a statement for the purposes of the

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1 inquiry. You disagreed with the accuracy of some parts
 2 of it; is that correct?
 3 A. Yes, that's correct, sir.
 4 Q. You raised your concerns about those inaccurate parts?
 5 A. Yes. I approached the CEO and I showed him an evidence
 6 that I did inform the trustees of the death threats and
 7 extremism-related issues at the centre.
 8 Q. We will come on to those, I assure you.
 9 A. Yes.
 10 Q. But have I correctly understood that you yourself
 11 consider, or you believe, that the ending of your
 12 employment by the mosque is connected to the fact that
 13 you have sought to point out inaccuracies in the public
 14 statements of the mosque?
 15 A. Yes. Yes, sir.
 16 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: That's going to be decided at
 17 an Employment Tribunal in due course, so we won't
 18 trespass on what they're going to do.
 19 MR GREANEY: Sir, I hope that I haven't gone too far.
 20 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: No, no.
 21 MR GREANEY: The reason I needed to ask you about that is
 22 because I'm certain that you'll have been told that
 23 Mr Haffar told the chairman yesterday that you hold
 24 a "grudge" against the trustee of the mosque and that as
 25 a result, you have, he maintains, told lies. Were you

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1 aware that Mr Haffar had said that?
 2 A. I was aware, yes, sir.
 3 Q. And what is your response? First, do you hold a grudge
 4 against the trustees of the mosque?
 5 A. I don't hold any grudges against the trustees, and
 6 I only said the truth which I know. I tried my best to
 7 back the truth I said with evidence, and I don't hold
 8 grudges against MIC because this is the place I served
 9 for 10 years and I do love the place. I only said the
 10 truth, what happened, to assist the inquiry.
 11 Q. Sir, I'm going to check through you, if I may, that
 12 everyone in court is able to hear the witness. They
 13 are. That's fine.
 14 Next I'm going to ask you a little bit about the
 15 mosque itself before we turn to the evidence about
 16 Salman Abedi and so on.
 17 First, in terms of the mosque, do you agree with
 18 evidence that Mr Haffar gave that the ethos of the
 19 mosque was middle of the road or mainstream Islam? Does
 20 my question make sense to you?
 21 A. Yes. The mosque, we didn't have instructions, like what
 22 to say, what to preach, so every individual was
 23 preaching the ideology or the beliefs he had. So the
 24 mosque as a mosque, there's no like banner in which
 25 could -- it could be described with it. So yes, it

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1 depends on the individuals, the individual preacher --
 2 preachers, yes.
 3 Q. I think I've understood what you mean. As a body, the
 4 mosque had no coherent or single ideology of its own.
 5 It was dependent on the particular ideology of the imam.
 6 A. Yes, you're right, sir.
 7 Q. Was there, in the period between 2014 and 2017,
 8 a significant Libyan contingent at the mosque in terms
 9 of those who attended for prayers?
 10 A. You mean ...?
 11 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Numbers. Were there large numbers?
 12 A. Always. Always many Libyans coming to the mosque, yes.
 13 MR GREANEY: Mr Haffar estimated that at one stage of the
 14 congregation, 20% may have been of Libyan heritage,
 15 although by 2017, it was about 10%. Do you agree with
 16 those estimates of his?
 17 A. I don't know, how did he come to these statistics? But
 18 I wouldn't like to comment on that.
 19 Q. He was just doing his best to estimate, but do you think
 20 he's miles off or does that sound about right?
 21 A. I wouldn't be able to comment on that, but there were
 22 always Libyans coming to the mosque.
 23 Q. In 2011, as you will certainly know, the First Libyan
 24 Civil War started, which led to the toppling of Gaddafi,
 25 and you'll know that better than most people.

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1 Am I right?
 2 A. Yes. Yes, sir.
 3 Q. Then in 2014, the Second Libyan Civil War started and,
 4 again, you'll know that very well, I'm sure.
 5 A. Yes, sir.
 6 Q. Were you aware over the period from 2011 of young men of
 7 Libyan heritage travelling to fight in those conflicts?
 8 A. Yes. In Benghazi too, too from Manchester. I did
 9 mention in my statement.
 10 Q. So who were the people that you were aware of that
 11 travelled from Manchester to Libya to fight?
 12 A. You mean names?
 13 Q. If you're comfortable with names, yes.
 14 A. One of them, I don't know his name, but his father,
 15 I know his father's name, he's one of the signatories
 16 on --
 17 Q. On the petition?
 18 A. -- the petition, yes.
 19 Q. We'll get to that. The other person?
 20 A. Yes, that one was a regular attendee to Didsbury Mosque.
 21 They used to live close to the mosque.
 22 Q. Yes. We'll get to his name in due course. So that was
 23 one person who travelled to fight in Libya?
 24 A. Yes.
 25 Q. And did you know what became of him in Libya, that

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1 person?
 2 A. I know he was -- he was -- he was killed in Benghazi,
 3 fighting with, I think, what they had as Al-Qaeda, or
 4 there was a coalition, basically.
 5 Q. And I think you told us that he had been a regular
 6 worshipper at the mosque.
 7 A. He was regular, yes.
 8 Q. And the second person, do you know the name?
 9 A. Second person, I think the name is Jibril (?), I think,
 10 the surname.
 11 Q. And that was also a person who went to fight in Libya?
 12 A. He went to fight in Libya, yes, as well. Someone came
 13 to him. He was resident in Manchester. He came to him
 14 and he gave him a ticket, and his mother -- I think his
 15 mother is still in Manchester -- she knows the person
 16 who came, who recruited him, who gave him the ticket,
 17 who facilitated, basically, his recruitment.
 18 Q. Do you know what became of that person?
 19 A. I know the area he was killed in in Benghazi. I heard
 20 that he was a sniper in that area, and that area, ISIS
 21 also existed.
 22 Q. So that --
 23 A. Asabri. It's called Asabri area in Benghazi.
 24 Q. I'm so sorry, I didn't mean to talk across you. But
 25 that person also died in the conflict?

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1 A. Yes. Yes, yes, in Benghazi, yes.
 2 Q. Had that person been a regular or infrequent attendee
 3 at the mosque?
 4 A. I don't know.
 5 Q. You don't know?
 6 A. I don't know.
 7 Q. Do you recognise the name Abdalraouf Abdallah?
 8 A. I've heard of him, but I don't know him personally.
 9 Q. You may have answered this already. Do you know whether
 10 he was someone who ever worshipped at the
 11 Didsbury Mosque?
 12 A. I don't know.
 13 Q. You don't know.
 14 Now, within the Libyan community who attended the
 15 mosque, were there some who were anti-Gaddafi and some
 16 who supported Gaddafi and his ideas or were they all in
 17 one direction?
 18 A. As far as I know, the majority of the Libyans who came
 19 to Didsbury Mosque, they were anti-Gaddafi. Supporters
 20 of Gaddafi, normally they don't come to Didsbury Mosque.
 21 Q. Were you aware of an organisation, to put it neutrally,
 22 called the Libyan or Libya Islamic Fighting Group, LIFG?
 23 Have you heard of it?
 24 A. We heard about it, yes.
 25 Q. And do you know whether any of those from the Libyan

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1 community who attended the mosque were members of or
 2 associated with the LIFG?
 3 A. Members in terms -- because these organisations, they
 4 don't, like -- they don't operate openly, so you
 5 wouldn't know --
 6 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: You wouldn't have a list.
 7 A. Yes, exactly. You wouldn't know who's member, who's not
 8 member. But difficult to say exactly, point the finger
 9 at anyone, specific one, and say, "He's a member of the
 10 fighting group".
 11 MR GREANEY: I understand, as plainly the chairman does
 12 also. Was there, however, a sense in this period from
 13 2011 and following that LIFG was a presence within the
 14 Libyan community that attended the mosque?
 15 A. I wouldn't be able to comment, but I know there were
 16 sympathisers, sympathisers with the groups in Benghazi,
 17 the terrorist groups, who were coming to
 18 Didsbury Mosque, and some of whom signed the petition
 19 against me. They objected to my sermon against those
 20 groups.
 21 Q. We'll get to the petition, I assure you.
 22 A. Okay.
 23 Q. I'm going to take you, against this background, please,
 24 to your first witness statement, so that's probably
 25 divider 1 in the bundle that you have. It's your

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1 witness statement dated 23 September 2020, page 12,
 2 paragraph 27. The INQ reference is {INQ035979/12}.
 3 A. So my first statement?
 4 Q. That's your first statement, yes.
 5 A. The bundle starts with ... sorry.
 6 Q. You take your time.
 7 A. Which page?
 8 Q. Page 12 of the statement, paragraph 27.
 9 A. Yes.
 10 Q. Do you have a paragraph that starts, "Since the second
 11 wave"? Are you with me?
 12 A. Yes. Yes, sir.
 13 Q. So in your statement, and I'm still dealing with the
 14 Libyan community that attended the mosque, you observe
 15 in your statement:
 16 "Since the second wave of the 'Civil War' in Libya
 17 which erupted in 2014, ISIS and Al-Qaeda related groups
 18 as well as 'the Libyan Shield' and other extreme groups
 19 were fighting side by side against the majority of the
 20 inhabitants of Benghazi."
 21 Pausing for a moment, was that something you were
 22 aware of personally in the period from 2014?
 23 A. Yes, sir. I went to Libya twice after the fall of
 24 Gaddafi, in 2012 and 2013, and I went to Benghazi to
 25 visit Benghazi as well, and there were signs of these

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1 groups operating in the city and trying to take control.
 2 So I'm a first-hand witness, so to speak.
 3 Q. You saw it with your own eyes?
 4 A. Yes, I saw it with my own eyes.
 5 Q. And was there also discussion within the mosque about
 6 the fact that these groups were becoming more prominent
 7 within Libya or was your knowledge only based upon what
 8 you saw and experienced yourself?
 9 A. What I saw and then after my sermon, those sympathisers
 10 objected, yes.
 11 Q. So this is your sermon of 3 October --
 12 A. 3 October, yes.
 13 Q. -- 2014, which we will get to.
 14 Just to pick up on your witness statement, you say:
 15 "The groups were perpetrating typical terrorist
 16 crimes such as beheadings, assassinations and suicide
 17 bombings."
 18 Were you aware that that was happening?
 19 A. Yes, it was. It was displayed on social media, yes.
 20 Q. Then you go on to say --
 21 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: When you were out in Libya or when
 22 you're back in this country?
 23 A. When I'm back here. The operations, like I mention in
 24 my third statement, Amaq News Agency of ISIS, they were
 25 broadcasting their operations in Benghazi openly.

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1 MR GREANEY: One of the observations you make in your
 2 statement is that the day of the sermon that you gave,
 3 the controversial one of 3 October 2014, was in fact
 4 a day of considerable significance within this part of
 5 the world because it was the day when the video of the
 6 murder of Mr Henning was released by Islamic State.
 7 A. Yes.
 8 Q. That's the kind of thing that you were becoming aware
 9 of, have I understood?
 10 A. Yes, sir. I was aware of later on, on the day, on the
 11 same day.
 12 Q. The next part of your statement is really what I wanted
 13 you to help us with in particular. You observe:
 14 "During that period ..."
 15 So it's the period from 2014:
 16 "... regular meetings were held at the [Manchester
 17 Islamic Centre] by supporters of this coalition who were
 18 afforded the facilities to meet throughout 2015 and
 19 2016."
 20 So when you say that meetings were held at
 21 Didsbury Mosque by supporters of this coalition, are you
 22 there referring to the coalition of Islamic State and
 23 Al-Qaeda related groups and the Libyan Shield?
 24 A. Yes. Yes, sir.
 25 Q. You will, I'm certain, have been made aware of the

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1 evidence, certainly at one stage of Mr Haffar yesterday,
 2 that the mosque was not a location really at which
 3 meetings could or did take place. So he was seeking to
 4 challenge this part of your account on the basis that
 5 that sort of thing didn't happen at all. I believe
 6 in that regard, you would want to draw our attention to
 7 two images posted on Facebook during the course of 2020;
 8 is that correct?
 9 A. Yes, sir. There are videos. They clearly are political
 10 activities, and also, they're two videos I quoted in my
 11 first statement as well, political activities as well.
 12 Q. There are references in your third statement and I think
 13 that Mr Lopez is in a position to display those images
 14 to us now. They both date, as you've explained to us,
 15 from 2020. We'll play the video, in fact, or some of
 16 it.
 17 (Video played to the inquiry)
 18 I think we can pause there, please.
 19 So the date of this post is 16 February 2020. What
 20 location is shown in that video?
 21 A. That's the activity -- activities hall in MIC.
 22 Q. That's within the mosque itself, is it?
 23 A. Within, yes. It's inside the premises.
 24 Q. And "Libyans for a Civil State", is that an organisation
 25 that you have any familiarity with?

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1 A. No. It is -- next to it, if you see, it's the
 2 17 February group or something. I think that's the name
 3 of the group.
 4 Q. 17 February forum --
 5 A. Forum, yes.
 6 Q. -- which I think is -- thank you for pointing that
 7 out -- a group that we know that Mr Graf had some
 8 association with.
 9 A. He was -- he was in charge of it previously.
 10 Q. He was in charge of it. Is what you're explaining to us
 11 that this appears to be an example of a meeting with
 12 a political tone taking place within the mosque?
 13 A. This is one in open, but there are other meetings which
 14 I referred to -- there was another hall, like, in the
 15 back of the mosque that's different. There were
 16 meetings which are held secretly or kind of secretly,
 17 which are different, different from this one.
 18 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Did you ever attend any of those secret
 19 meetings?
 20 A. No, no. I was against them.
 21 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Just help me how you were aware that
 22 they were taking place?
 23 A. Because we saw them coming in, gathering inside.
 24 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: You saw people coming in?
 25 A. Yes, and they closed the door.

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1 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I just want you to help me. You told me
 2 that it was after the sermon that you became aware of
 3 these groups within the mosque who were supporting
 4 people you've described as terrorists.
 5 A. Yes.
 6 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: So you were not aware of them or what
 7 they were doing or that they were attending until you
 8 gave that sermon and there was then the petition against
 9 it?
 10 A. Yes. Yes, sir, and some congregation members informed
 11 me and then I saw it myself. They used to gather in the
 12 evening in one of the rooms there.
 13 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Just remind me, please, of the date of
 14 your sermon.
 15 A. It was 3 October 2014.
 16 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay. Do you recognise the speaker
 17 in that video?
 18 A. Yes, sir. Yes, sir.
 19 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Who is he?
 20 A. One of the Libyan community.
 21 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: One of the Libyan community, okay,
 22 thank you.
 23 MR GREANEY: Are there two or three? Are there three or
 24 two? Let's see the second, please, Mr Lopez.
 25 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: We should remind ourselves this is

20

1 different from the 17 February Martyrs.
 2 MR GREANEY: It is. The 17 February Martyrs Brigade was
 3 an Islamist militia that fought in Libya. This is some
 4 form of organisation that appears to have operated
 5 within the United Kingdom.
 6 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: And we heard demonstrated in London
 7 about what?
 8 MR GREANEY: It demonstrated about the fact that the
 9 United Arab Emirates had seized two Libyan businessmen
 10 who were believed to have Islamic State associations.
 11 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Believed by the UAE that they had those
 12 associations?
 13 MR GREANEY: Yes, as I understand it, and Salman Abedi, in
 14 his red T-shirt, was one of those who protested.
 15 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.
 16 MR GREANEY: Can you just go a bit further up so we can see
 17 the date, if that's possible? 16 February 2020.
 18 Is that an image, as you understand it, from the
 19 same meeting?
 20 A. Same. Same meeting, yes, sir.
 21 Q. So we can see a little more clearly there the end of
 22 that title, "17 February Forum".
 23 I'm quite confident, sir, you're right not to attach
 24 too much importance to the coincidence of 17 February,
 25 because that is an extremely important date in the

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1 history.
 2 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I just wanted people to all understand
 3 that this is something different from the Brigade.
 4 MR GREANEY: The third post, please.
 5 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Do you know that man in the picture?
 6 A. Yes, I know, sir.
 7 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Another Libyan?
 8 A. Another member of the Libyan community.
 9 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Who attended the mosque?
 10 A. Yes, I think.
 11 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.
 12 MR GREANEY: The date of this, also 16 February 2020.
 13 Again, is it your understanding that this is showing the
 14 same meeting?
 15 A. Same gathering, yes. Yes, sir.
 16 Q. Thank you, Mr Lopez. We can take that from the screen.
 17 Is the point that you're seeking to make that
 18 insofar as Mr Haffar was saying that meetings with
 19 a political tone didn't take place, here is an example
 20 of such a meeting occurring?
 21 A. Yes, sir.
 22 Q. As you said in your statement and have now explained to
 23 the chairman, you became aware in late 2014 of meetings:
 24 "During that period regular meetings were held
 25 at the MIC by supporters of this coalition who were

22

1 afforded the facilities to meet throughout 2015 and
 2 2016. When some concerned members of the congregation
 3 raised the issue with me, I discussed it with
 4 Mr Khayat."
 5 Who, as we know, is a trustee:
 6 "His response was that 'the brothers had asked for
 7 a venue for their activities and we allowed them'.
 8 A. Yes, sir.
 9 Q. And is that correct?
 10 A. That's correct, sir, yes. It did happen.
 11 Q. When was it that concerned members of the congregation
 12 raised the issue of Islamic State and Al-Qaeda coalition
 13 supporters meeting at the mosque?
 14 A. That period, 2015/16, yes, a few individuals approached
 15 me and then I went to spoke to him, to Mr Khayat.
 16 Q. And what was the nature of the discussion? Was it
 17 a friendly or tense discussion?
 18 A. With him?
 19 Q. With him, yes.
 20 A. It was normal. It was a normal -- and I did tell him,
 21 "Why are you allowing them facilities at the MIC?" And
 22 he said, "Well, just the brothers ask for a place and
 23 I allow them". Yes.
 24 Q. Were you raising it with him because it was something
 25 that you thought ought not to be happening?

23

1 A. Of course. It is wrong. It shouldn't be happening.
 2 Q. Paragraph 29 of your witness statement. You go on to
 3 state --
 4 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Sorry, just to interrupt for a moment.
 5 MR GREANEY: Of course.
 6 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Why do you say it was wrong? There are
 7 lots of churches who hire out their halls for all sorts
 8 of meetings. So why was it wrong for these --
 9 A. Because the meetings were -- people are gathering for
 10 political purposes and in support of terrorist groups.
 11 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Right. Can I just divide those two?
 12 A. Yes.
 13 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Is it wrong to allow the mosque to be
 14 used for meetings for political meetings of any sort?
 15 A. Yes.
 16 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: It is?
 17 A. It is. It is wrong, yes.
 18 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: But in addition, you say these were
 19 terrorist groups?
 20 A. Yes, supporting terrorist groups in Libya.
 21 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.
 22 MR GREANEY: After you had raised this with Mr Khayat, to
 23 your knowledge, did such meetings continue or did they
 24 stop?
 25 A. From his answer, he said, "We allow them. We allow them

24

1 the venue." So he's in charge of the place, I can't say
 2 more than that. So I just expressed my objection, but
 3 I have no authority in the place.
 4 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Did you attend any of these meetings
 5 yourself?
 6 A. No. No, sir. Never attended. I mean, the attendees of
 7 these meetings, they didn't like me.
 8 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: The people who went didn't like you?
 9 A. Didn't like me.
 10 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: So you wouldn't have been very welcome
 11 at the meetings?
 12 A. Yes. No, sir.
 13 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.
 14 MR GREANEY: At paragraph 29, you observe:
 15 "Many believe that such activities ..."
 16 You're talking about the activities of these
 17 meetings:
 18 "... in a sacred religious place to be not only
 19 wrong, but serve to encourage a breeding ground for
 20 radicalisation."
 21 You said "many believe". Was it your view that
 22 there was a risk that what was happening would lead to
 23 radicalisation?
 24 A. My view and the community's view. Muslims
 25 overwhelmingly -- I mean, the vast majority of Muslims

25

1 are against extremism and they would never agree to be
 2 tolerant towards any activities related to extremism.
 3 So it's not my opinion only; it's the opinion of all
 4 Muslims, almost.
 5 Q. To your knowledge during this period, let's say 2014 to
 6 2017, were there any policies or procedures in place for
 7 identifying and/or addressing extremism within the
 8 mosque?
 9 A. No, sir.
 10 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay. I just want to stop you just for
 11 one moment. I'm following your statement as well and
 12 this is -- I'm not doubting for a moment what you say,
 13 do you understand? I just want to try and get to what
 14 we can actually say for definite from what you're
 15 saying.
 16 So you've just said that there were many who
 17 believed -- this is paragraph 29 -- that such activities
 18 in the sacred religious place to be not only wrong but
 19 serve to encourage a breeding ground for radicalisation.
 20 That's what you have just told us.
 21 You go on to justify that by pointing out about the
 22 two youths from Manchester, who you've already told us
 23 about, who went out to Libya and died in conflict there.
 24 One of them, you said, was a regular attender at the
 25 mosque. The other one wasn't a regular attender at the

26

1 mosque?
 2 A. I won't be able to say whether he was or not.
 3 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay. But are you aware of either of
 4 them attending any of these meetings that you're talking
 5 about?
 6 A. I am aware of the father of one of them, the regular
 7 attendee, he was participating in these meetings.
 8 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: The father of the one who died?
 9 A. Yes.
 10 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you very much.
 11 MR GREANEY: We're going to get to his name in due course
 12 when we look at the petition, as I've understood from
 13 you.
 14 I'm going to move on next to a different topic,
 15 which is Mustafa Graf, about whom we heard yesterday.
 16 Was he your fellow imam for a considerable period of
 17 time?
 18 A. Yes, sir.
 19 Q. Was he, like you, of Libyan heritage?
 20 A. Yes, sir.
 21 Q. Did you know at any time that's relevant to us what his
 22 attitude was to the conflict in Libya?
 23 A. He -- I mean, he expressed his -- he supports -- when
 24 the second wave in Benghazi erupted, he was praying for
 25 the groups, for the terrorist groups in Benghazi.

27

1 He was praying for their victory, while they were
 2 beheading civilians and beheading innocent people.
 3 Q. When you say he was praying for those terrorist groups,
 4 do you mean the groups affiliated with Islamic State
 5 and/or Al-Qaeda?
 6 A. It was one coalition and all of them, they went under
 7 the banner of revolutionaries of Benghazi, so there was
 8 one coalition in one side and the inhabitants of
 9 Benghazi on one side, the other side. It was not only
 10 the Libyan Army in Benghazi fighting because at the
 11 time, most of them, more than 80% of the fighters
 12 against these groups were volunteers from the civilians,
 13 because people didn't want this ideology.
 14 Q. How did you know that he was praying for those terrorist
 15 groups in Benghazi?
 16 A. Individual members were coming, approaching me. Some of
 17 them said, "We express our objection" to me directly
 18 after the sermon. One of them said, "When I approach
 19 him to object, Mr Khayat took his side. He defended
 20 him."
 21 Q. Took Mustafa Graf's side?
 22 A. Yes, took Mustafa Graf's, yes.
 23 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Are you saying that these were prayers
 24 at one of the acts of worship?
 25 A. Friday prayers. Yes, Friday sermons.

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1 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: In the Friday sermons, he's praying for
2 people who you believed to be members of IS and AQ?
3 A. Yes. Yes, he was praying for the coalition.
4 MR GREANEY: Did you hear Mr Graf's sermon on
5 16 December 2016 or subsequently become aware of it?
6 A. Yes. Yes, sir.
7 Q. Which of those? Did you hear it or become aware of it
8 afterwards?
9 A. No, I did hear it. I did --- I did watch the --- in the
10 news, the story, yes.
11 Q. So at what stage did you become aware of the
12 controversial sermon given on 16 December 2016?
13 A. As I mentioned, he was already basically expressing his
14 support for the coalition in Benghazi, so that was not
15 strange to me, yes.
16 Q. Have you ever listened to a recording of the sermon or
17 read a transcript of it?
18 A. Yes, sir.
19 Q. Did you understand his sermon to involve any
20 encouragement to armed jihad?
21 A. To be honest, I don't recall the entire sermon, but
22 within the context, there were maybe calls for
23 collection, donations for Syrians ---
24 Q. Yes.
25 A. --- and also call for armed jihad.

29

1 Q. Do you remember whether there was any reaction on the
2 part of the congregation to that particular sermon?
3 A. No, sir.
4 Q. Do you remember whether there was any reaction on the
5 part of the trustees of the mosque to that particular
6 sermon?
7 A. No, sir.
8 Q. What we heard yesterday, as you may know, is that there
9 was a concern on the part of the trustees that some
10 might interpret what was said on 16 December as
11 an encouragement to armed jihad. Were you ever asked to
12 address that risk in your own sermons?
13 A. Can you repeat, please?
14 Q. Of course.
15 A. Yes, thank you.
16 Q. So the trustees recognised that what Mr Graf had said
17 might encourage some listeners to armed jihad.
18 A. Yes.
19 Q. And it might be thought that having identified that
20 risk, something should be done to address it. Does that
21 make sense?
22 A. To address it, you mean, with Graf only?
23 Q. To address it either by putting out some information
24 saying, "If you've understood it this way, you shouldn't
25 do", or another sermon being made to say, "This is what

30

1 Mr Graf said on 16 December. We want to be very clear
2 that as a mosque, we do not support this kind of
3 conduct." Were you ever asked to address that risk in
4 such a way?
5 A. No. No, sir.
6 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: And you indicated that it was concerned
7 with armed jihad. Is that how you understood it?
8 A. Yes. Yes, sir.
9 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I mean, the main thrust of it does
10 appear to have been raising money for those people who
11 were suffering from the bombing going on out there. Do
12 you agree with that?
13 A. I agree with that, yes. I agree with it including
14 donations, collection of donations. You know, all
15 groups, they do collect donations as well.
16 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay. We do understand that jihad
17 doesn't just mean an armed struggle of any sort or
18 taking up arms. It means putting a lot of effort into
19 something. Is that right?
20 A. That's right, sir.
21 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: It's been suggested that the jihad
22 within the context of the sermon was putting a lot of
23 effort into getting donations and getting more money to
24 give to those who were suffering from the bombing.
25 I'm asking you these questions because I suspect we may

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1 not have the contrary view being put to this witness by
2 anybody here, but I could be wrong.
3 A. If you want my formal opinion, I would prefer to listen
4 to it, if you play the sermon.
5 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Yes, right. So you haven't listened to
6 it?
7 A. Long time ago.
8 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Long time ago, okay. But jihad does
9 have that different context?
10 A. Jihad has a spiritual meaning. It could be jihad,
11 struggle against the self, the evil in the self, means
12 not to commit sins, not to hurt others. This is --- one
13 meaning of jihad was the money, means donating to help
14 the poor and those in need, and also need armed, armed
15 struggle. It depends on the context.
16 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Right. Are you aware that the police
17 instructed an expert, I think a very well-known
18 expert ---
19 MR GREANEY: Yes, Robert Gleave, yes.
20 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: --- in Muslim studies and he looked at it
21 and he said, as I understand it, that within this
22 context, jihad was talking, or at least arguably was
23 talking, about the struggle to raise donations.
24 MR GREANEY: It was not an encouragement to military
25 activity was his view, yes.

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1 A. I haven't read that report.
 2 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Right. It's unfair to ask your opinion
 3 of it. There were people being bombed, right?
 4 A. Yes.
 5 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Who were doing the bombings of the
 6 people who all Muslims were concerned about? Who was
 7 involved in that bombing?
 8 A. I mean, in Syria, you know, the situation was very vague
 9 because the government were perpetrating a lot of crimes
 10 against civilians. But also on the other side, there
 11 were ISIS operating, Al-Qaeda related groups, they were
 12 also perpetrating crimes. That's why —
 13 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I don't pretend to understand the
 14 politics in Syria or indeed in Libya. I doubt many of
 15 us can particularly. So it's a fairly confused
 16 situation?
 17 A. It is. It is, and it's wrong. The civil war is wrong
 18 in Syria. That's why I always recommended people not to
 19 get involved. So I was approached by some people to ask
 20 me for my opinion, "Should we go and help there?" So
 21 I said, always said, "No, don't go. Don't get involved,
 22 because it is very messy."
 23 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.
 24 MR GREANEY: You are, if I may say so, quite right to
 25 observe that there is a conflict or a dispute about

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1 whether or not the sermon of 16 December is to be read
 2 as an encouragement to armed jihad, and it perhaps also
 3 ought to be said that on the back of the report of
 4 Robert Gleave, the Crown Prosecution Service made
 5 a decision that there should be no charges against
 6 Mr Graf.
 7 What we've understood from your evidence is that
 8 whatever the position might be about 16 December, it was
 9 your understanding from what you had been told that
 10 Mustafa Graf, the other imam at the mosque, had been
 11 praying for those involved in terrorist activity in
 12 Benghazi.
 13 A. Yes, sir.
 14 Q. Now, with the emergence of terrorist organisations
 15 within Libya, did you yourself deliver a series of
 16 sermons about that situation?
 17 A. Yes, sir.
 18 Q. Was one such sermon delivered, as you've indicated
 19 already, on 3 October 2014?
 20 A. Yes, sir.
 21 Q. You've produced two documents — well, more than two
 22 now — that bear upon that particular sermon, and
 23 I'm going to put each of them on the screen. The first
 24 won't mean anything to me, but you'll be able to explain
 25 it. We'll put them on the screen and you can give us

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1 some words of explanation.
 2 First of all, you have produced an Arabic
 3 manuscript. This is your exhibit MES/1. The INQ
 4 reference is {INQ035981/3}.
 5 Is this the Arabic manuscript that you have provided
 6 that relates to the sermon of 3 October?
 7 A. Yes, sir.
 8 Q. I'm not going to ask you to read it out, but does it
 9 represent a script for that sermon?
 10 A. Yes, sir. I always write my sermons beforehand, so when
 11 I go on the pulpit, I have it fully written. Sometimes
 12 I add some more information, quote more from the text,
 13 but you could say over 95% of my sermon is written
 14 beforehand.
 15 Q. You've also produced, as your exhibit MES/2, a document
 16 in English, and I'll put that on the screen. It's the
 17 same INQ reference, Mr Lopez, {INQ035981/24}.
 18 A. Yes, sir.
 19 Q. I am going to read out some parts of this in a moment.
 20 First of all, can I understand what this document is?
 21 Is it the same document as the Arabic script or is it
 22 a summary or some different form of document?
 23 A. Because most of the congregation are Arab, Arab
 24 speaking, Arabic speaking, so what I do is I deliver
 25 a sermon of 15/20 minutes in Arabic and then a summary

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1 of it in English.
 2 Q. Again, are we therefore looking at a script of the part
 3 of the sermon that you would deliver in English?
 4 A. Yes, sir. This is the English — English part, yes.
 5 Q. So there are just some parts of this that I'm going to
 6 read out, and I'll remind you that the context for these
 7 questions is that the criticism, we were told yesterday
 8 by Mr Haffar, of your speech was that it was political
 9 in nature. Now, don't answer that at the moment, but
 10 that's the context.
 11 A. Okay.
 12 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay. Just so I understand, you say
 13 that your sermon in Arabic would be about 20 minutes.
 14 A. Yes. It varies, around 20, sometimes 25.
 15 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay.
 16 A. That day, it was longer, on that day, because —
 17 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Give us some idea of how long it would
 18 have been in Arabic.
 19 A. Sorry, sir? Say it again?
 20 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: How long in Arabic was the sermon?
 21 A. I could say between 15 to 25 minutes.
 22 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: On that day?
 23 A. Yes, but that day was longer, on that day of 3 October.
 24 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I'm talking about that particular day.
 25 A. Yes. Maybe half an hour, the Arabic one, yes.

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1 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay. The summary would last how long?
 2 A. Seven minutes maybe. Maybe seven minutes.
 3 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I'm trying to get some feel for how much
 4 was actually repeated in the English summary. That's
 5 all.
 6 MR GREANEY: Obviously there were things that you said in
 7 Arabic that you didn't say when you delivered your
 8 English summary.
 9 A. Yes, a lot, sir.
 10 Q. But does the English summary provide, I don't know how
 11 to put it, the flavour or an indication of what you had
 12 been communicating in Arabic?
 13 A. Yes, sir. But I didn't mention the names of the
 14 groups --
 15 Q. Okay.
 16 A. -- and some other parts of the text as well, which
 17 I quoted in the Arabic, I didn't mention in the English.
 18 Q. I'll get to that, but I want to read out some parts of
 19 this which will give us a flavour of the English summary
 20 and which, from what you have said, will also give us
 21 a flavour, albeit a more limited flavour, of the Arabic
 22 sermon.
 23 The fourth paragraph down begins:
 24 "Dear brothers and sisters ..."
 25 So that's just a formal introduction to the

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1 paragraph, is that correct?
 2 A. Yes, sir.
 3 Q. "... this is a warning against fighting and enmity
 4 between people ..."
 5 Did you say that?
 6 A. Yes, sir.
 7 Q. And what did you mean by that?
 8 A. It means what it says, sir; like attacking people,
 9 hurting others, attacking others.
 10 Q. So it's a discouragement to violence?
 11 A. Yes, sir.
 12 Q. "... it is a warning against transgressing against their
 13 lives and wealth and honor. This is the first and most
 14 important warning given to us by our Prophet ... before
 15 he passed away. That is because transgression against
 16 the sanctities of the people is one of the most grievous
 17 of sins that threaten Muslim society and engenders
 18 Allah's wrath. To violate the sanctity of any Muslim in
 19 any situation or place equals violating the sanctity of
 20 the Sacred Precinct of Mecca and the Sacred Months -- and
 21 what an enormity that is!"
 22 Then this:
 23 "And whoever aids and abets the killing of someone
 24 is a partner in the crime, as it has been reported that
 25 the Prophet ... said, 'Whoever helps in the killing of

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1 a Muslim, even if by a segment of a word, then he will
 2 meet Allah and it will be written between his eyes:
 3 'Despaired of Allah's mercy.'"
 4 Again, can you be confident that those are words you
 5 said in English?
 6 A. Yes, sir.
 7 Q. You went on to say:
 8 "Let us be frank with each other, dear brothers and
 9 sisters. What we see today of takfir, where people
 10 declare Muslims disbelievers, and religious extremism
 11 and ghastly crimes done by fanatics -- whatever they call
 12 themselves ..."
 13 When you refer to "ghastly crimes done by fanatics",
 14 to what were you referring?
 15 A. I refer to ISIS, Al-Qaeda, suicide bombings, beheadings
 16 of innocent people. All their crimes.
 17 Q. Then a little further down that paragraph is written:
 18 "And terrorism -- which is one of these grievances --
 19 has never been a solution to any problem and has never
 20 fixed anything, so it is absolutely incumbent upon us to
 21 stand united against the scourge of takfir and
 22 extremism ..."
 23 Again, you may say the words speak for themselves,
 24 but what were you seeking to communicate when you
 25 explained that terrorism had never been a solution to

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1 any problem and so a stand should be taken against
 2 extremism?
 3 A. Because some terrorist groups sometimes use political
 4 pretexts for their crimes and they try to justify their
 5 crimes by quoting grievances maybe towards some Muslims
 6 in some parts of the world. So I was telling the
 7 community, "This is not the right way". So terrorism is
 8 always wrong, it will never be justified, and
 9 a grievance should always be addressed within the legal
 10 channels.
 11 Q. In the longer Arabic version of the sermon, did you name
 12 particular groups?
 13 A. Yes, sir.
 14 Q. Which groups did you name?
 15 A. I named ISIS, Al-Qaeda and the Shura Council of Benghazi
 16 Revolutionaries, which is another banner for Al-Qaeda
 17 and for the Ansar al-Sharia.
 18 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Can you say the last one, the Shura?
 19 A. The Shura Council of Benghazi Revolutionaries.
 20 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay. You say that's another name for
 21 Al-Qaeda. I'm not doubting you. Does everybody agree
 22 with that view or do some people have a different view
 23 of what that council is?
 24 A. This council, they had --
 25 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay, not from my question.

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1 A. Okay.
 2 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I know what your view is. My question
 3 is do other people have a different view of it and not
 4 think it's aligned to Al-Qaeda, or does everybody know
 5 it's aligned?
 6 A. Okay. Inhabitants of Benghazi who lived among them,
 7 they agree 100% with this.
 8 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Right, but elsewhere --
 9 A. But sympathisers, no, of course they will call them
 10 revolutionaries.
 11 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay. I want to know, is it generally
 12 believed by everyone in this country, for example, the
 13 people who came to your mosque, that that revolutionary
 14 council was really just another name for Al-Qaeda?
 15 A. No. No, some sympathise with them. They don't --
 16 I wouldn't be able to answer this question, whether
 17 those sympathisers, do they know really -- I don't think
 18 anyone doesn't know they are affiliated with Al-Qaeda --
 19 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay, right.
 20 A. -- because if you allow me, sir, to make a comment.
 21 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Do.
 22 A. In their statements, the official statements which were
 23 displayed and broadcasted, they used to excommunicate
 24 everyone, say, "Everyone involved in election is
 25 a disbeliever. Everyone who takes part in Parliament is

1 disbeliever. Anyone who is going to protest against us,
 2 even peaceful protests, we will behead them, we will
 3 kill them." So this is not -- it is clearly a terrorist
 4 group.
 5 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I don't know much about Libyan politics
 6 and I defy some people to know anything about it at all.
 7 It's obviously quite difficult, particularly at this
 8 time. I am just trying to get a feel for whether
 9 everyone had the view you have, about the fact that they
 10 were another name for Al-Qaeda, or whether there were
 11 differences of opinion about it.
 12 A. Yes, sir.
 13 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.
 14 A. Thank you.
 15 MR GREANEY: Was it, whether in English or Arabic,
 16 a political sermon, in your view?
 17 A. As you can see, sir, it is only from -- I speak from
 18 a religious perspective. I was speaking about the
 19 sanctity of a human life. So I didn't mention political
 20 groups. I'm not affiliated with any political party or
 21 any political trend, and I just -- was just basically
 22 combating terrorism and extremism. There's no political
 23 in any sort of form in my sermon. It's entirely
 24 religious sermon, and this is what almost the entire
 25 congregation understood, despite -- I mean, except the

1 handful of people who objected.
 2 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: It's quite difficult to keep religion
 3 and politics entirely separate, isn't it?
 4 A. In some ways, sir. It depends on the definition now.
 5 When we go to look for the definition for terrorism,
 6 they say it is attacking civilians for religious or
 7 political or ideological reason. So politics maybe is
 8 part of terrorism already. So when you criticise
 9 terrorist groups, they always say you got involved in
 10 politics. But for me, I only spoke about sanctity of
 11 human lives.
 12 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I'm just pointing out that it's quite
 13 difficult to keep politics and religion entirely
 14 separate because politics may be contrary to
 15 a particular political view, could be contrary to your
 16 religious view.
 17 A. Yes, you're right, sir. I wouldn't speak about social
 18 justice, for example. Some people maybe deem that as
 19 political activity, whereas social justice is part of
 20 all Abrahamic faiths. We all promote social justice.
 21 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.
 22 MR GREANEY: What was the reaction of the congregation to
 23 your sermon?
 24 A. At the end of my sermon, always the end of every Friday
 25 sermon, the imam makes some supplications, to supplicate

1 for the congregation, for their families, for the
 2 communities, and I did supplicate at the end, and I did
 3 ask God to clean our communities from any extremists
 4 from this evil ideology. And the congregation were
 5 positive with me there, all taking my side, I could say,
 6 almost all of them, except the handful. Only four or
 7 five people maybe objected at the end.
 8 Q. How many people do you think were there and listening to
 9 the sermon?
 10 A. On that day, maybe I could say between maybe 1,000 and
 11 1,500 maybe.
 12 Q. And your perception was that overwhelmingly, although
 13 not exclusively, they were supportive of the
 14 anti-terrorist views that you'd been expressing.
 15 A. Yes, sir.
 16 Q. But a handful of those who attended, should we
 17 understand, felt differently?
 18 A. Yes, sir.
 19 Q. And how did it become apparent to you that a small
 20 number of attendees were not in agreement with your
 21 sermon? What happened?
 22 A. Their reaction, one of them snatched the microphone and
 23 he said, "Oh, you express your political views". And
 24 then another maybe three or four people maybe, they
 25 stood and they expressed their objection. Yes.

1 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: We have heard he was a surgeon --
 2 I don't want his name -- the man who snatched the
 3 microphone and spoke. Is that correct?
 4 A. Yes, cardiologist, yes. He's a cardiologist. And I did
 5 tell him he should feel ashamed to defend ISIS, and he's
 6 a doctor. I did tell him this in front of the
 7 congregation, yes.
 8 MR GREANEY: So we can get a picture, was there really quite
 9 an unpleasant scene at the end of your sermon as
 10 a result?
 11 A. Indeed, yes. Yes, sir.
 12 Q. Did you draw to the attention of the trustees what had
 13 happened at the end of your sermon?
 14 A. Yes, I did. I had a meeting with Mr Khayat and he did
 15 blame me for -- he said, "You shouldn't have spoke
 16 against these groups". Then he emailed me saying --
 17 claiming that it was political, and I did tell him, "If
 18 I had the opportunity again, I would do the same again
 19 and I will speak against terrorism always". This was
 20 another meeting, face-to-face meeting.
 21 Q. So the trustees, in the form of the trustee you spoke
 22 to, Mr Khayat, were not supportive?
 23 A. He was against me, yes.
 24 Q. I want to ask you a little bit more about the reaction
 25 of the congregation, or some part of it, and others

1 in the period afterwards. I think we can probably deal
 2 with most of this in summary, but some of it in detail.
 3 In short, were extremely unpleasant messages posted
 4 about you on social media?
 5 A. Yes, sir.
 6 Q. Including death threats?
 7 A. Yes, sir.
 8 Q. Was one such message, unpleasant -- I'm not saying death
 9 threat at the moment, but was one such message posted on
 10 social media by the father of Salman and Hashem Abedi?
 11 A. Yes, sir.
 12 Q. I'm going to ask that it be displayed on the screen and
 13 I will invite you to translate it for us.
 14 The INQ reference, Mr Lopez, is {INQ035981/36}.
 15 Yousef M Hanaa, is that a person that, so far as you
 16 know, is the father of Hashem and Salman Abedi?
 17 A. Yes, sir, and this is his picture.
 18 Q. That's his picture. He's a man you recognise, is he?
 19 A. Yes. Yes, sir.
 20 Q. I'll come back to that in due course. Are you able to
 21 translate his -- it looks like Facebook -- Facebook
 22 post?
 23 A. I did correct the original translation. I had my
 24 comment, and I think it should be in the bundle, the
 25 actual. If you can refer to it, that would be easier

1 maybe.
 2 Q. Do you have a copy of the translation available?
 3 I haven't found the document, I confess, entirely easy
 4 to follow.
 5 A. It was in the bundle. I could translate, or try to.
 6 Q. Let's find it in your document. I'm going to put your
 7 solicitor, Mr Iftikhar, on the spot and ask whether
 8 he is able to help me with the page of the 60-page
 9 document that the translation is on. If not
 10 immediately, certainly something we can come back to.
 11 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: While we're looking at it, perhaps I can
 12 just ask you this.
 13 A. Yes.
 14 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: You told us this was a longer than
 15 normal sermon. I think the recommended length is
 16 20 minutes.
 17 A. That's what I do normally, yes.
 18 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay, so this was longer than normal.
 19 Were you aware or did you realise that the contents
 20 might be controversial to some people? I'm sure some
 21 sermons may be completely routine.
 22 A. Yes.
 23 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: But other sermons maybe are making
 24 a point that is ...
 25 A. It was a bit longer because of the sensitivity of the

1 issue.
 2 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay.
 3 A. At the time, I felt the need to address the issue of
 4 extremism.
 5 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Why was the issue sensitive?
 6 A. Because to protect our young Muslims from being
 7 recruited, from joining these groups.
 8 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I understand the importance of it.
 9 I just wondered why it's sensitive in a mosque and why
 10 you can't just --
 11 A. I mean, sensitive is -- it is more stressed, it is more
 12 obligatory on me to focus on this issue --
 13 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay.
 14 A. -- as a religious leader. Yes.
 15 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Right. How are we getting on with the
 16 translation?
 17 MR GREANEY: I think I might have found it myself, sir, if
 18 you bear with me a second.
 19 (Pause)
 20 The translation reads, and you tell me if this is
 21 right:
 22 "The worshippers in the mosque must seek to isolate
 23 this man so that events do not develop and what is not
 24 rewarding happens and the mosque is closed by the
 25 British Government, God bless."

1 A. Yes, that's right.
 2 Q. Is that a fair translation?
 3 A. That's right, sir.
 4 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: That rather suggests that he's saying
 5 the British Government will be objecting to what you
 6 were saying.
 7 A. Yes. I don't know. It looks like it, sir, yes, sir.
 8 MR GREANEY: That was an objection to what you had done, but
 9 not a death threat. Nonetheless, there were death
 10 threats to you?
 11 A. No. No, there weren't, sir. It wasn't, no, but it was
 12 inciting -- inciting people against me, clearly, yes.
 13 Q. Were there threats in the course of these messages
 14 overall to cause you harm; not Ramadan Abedi's message,
 15 but other messages?
 16 A. Psychological harm, yes, sir.
 17 Q. Did you inform the trustees of the fact that these
 18 unpleasant messages had been posted about you?
 19 A. I did inform them that I received death threats, yes, in
 20 writing.
 21 Q. And was it true that you had received death threats?
 22 A. On Facebook, yes, sir, yes.
 23 Q. That was all I was driving at.
 24 A. Yes.
 25 Q. And did you send a message to Mr Khayat about the fact

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1 of those threats?
 2 A. Yes, sir. The email, yes.
 3 Q. I believe the email is your exhibit MES/7, which we'll
 4 put on the screen. It's in Arabic. We'll put it on the
 5 screen just so we can identify the date. I do have the
 6 translation of the part that I'm interested in.
 7 Mr Lopez, the reference is {INQ035981/53}.
 8 Is that your email to Mr Khayat that deals, among
 9 other things, with the --
 10 A. I think you'll need to -- it's upside down.
 11 Q. It's upside down?
 12 A. Yes.
 13 Q. Thank you very much.
 14 (Pause)
 15 Is that the email message that you sent to Mr Khayat
 16 that deals with this issue?
 17 A. Yes, sir, but it's not really very clear here, so
 18 I won't be able to read it clearly.
 19 Q. You have provided a translation.
 20 A. Yes.
 21 Q. And I'm going to read out the part of the translation
 22 that you've provided. Within that email is this:
 23 "Some comments were written on the Internet which
 24 included threats to harm or kill me, and they are linked
 25 to people in Manchester."

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1 A. Yes, sir.
 2 Q. So that's something you told Mr Khayat about.
 3 A. Yes.
 4 Q. Can you, from this document, tell us the date of that
 5 email?
 6 A. It is not clear here, but it was in December 2014.
 7 Q. There is a date on it, which is December 11, 2014.
 8 A. Yes.
 9 Q. And that accords with your memory?
 10 A. Yes, sir.
 11 Q. So the trustees, at least in the form of Mr Khayat, were
 12 aware of what was happening to you; is that the
 13 position?
 14 A. Yes, sir.
 15 Q. Thank you. We can take that from the screen.
 16 A. Yes, sir, and I did request him also to know the
 17 signatories on the petition --
 18 Q. So that was --
 19 A. -- in that email.
 20 Q. That was to be the next question. Did you become aware
 21 that a petition had been started?
 22 A. Yes, sir.
 23 Q. How did you become aware that a petition had been
 24 started?
 25 A. I was approached of some members of the community and

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1 they said one jihadist Libyan, Salafi jihadist, he was
 2 requesting them to sign the petition against me, and
 3 they refused and then they came and they told me, yes.
 4 Q. In the email we just looked at, you were asking
 5 Mr Khayat for that petition, is that correct?
 6 A. Yes, sir.
 7 Q. But at the time, were you not given the petition?
 8 A. They refused to give it, sir, yes.
 9 Q. And indeed, is it only recently in the course of the
 10 Employment Tribunal proceedings that you have come into
 11 possession of the petition?
 12 A. Yes, sir, yesterday. I received it yesterday.
 13 Q. You received it yesterday?
 14 A. Yes, within the bundle of the Employment Tribunal from
 15 the MIC solicitor.
 16 Q. And through your lawyers, as you'll be aware, we
 17 received it yesterday --
 18 A. Yes, sir.
 19 Q. -- or this morning perhaps --
 20 A. Yes, sir.
 21 Q. -- having not seen it before.
 22 A. Yes.
 23 Q. So I'm going to ask -- again, this has been translated,
 24 either by you or your lawyers, and so if there is any
 25 inaccuracy that the mosque wish to draw to our

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1 attention, no doubt they can do so.
 2 A. Okay.
 3 Q. Are we going to put first of all the email on the
 4 screen? Could we have the first INQ reference? This
 5 has gone on very recently indeed, sir, so I don't have
 6 the INQ reference, but I have seen documents.
 7 MR COOPER: It's {INQ100083/1}.
 8 MR GREANEY: That's very helpful, Mr Cooper, thank you very
 9 much.
 10 So this is the translation of the Arabic:
 11 "Brothers/Trustees of MIC,
 12 "We the undersigned, members of MIC congregation,
 13 writing this petition to yourselves, in hope that you
 14 take our complaint seriously and decisively due what the
 15 Friday preacher Mohammed El-Saeiti did on the pulpit of
 16 MIC on the Day of Arafah 1435 corresponding to
 17 03 October 2014.
 18 "This person spoke bad about some important figures
 19 of the Libyan revolution and wrongly attacked the pious
 20 revolutionaries and accused them of terrorism and
 21 extremism, and he wrongly indicated that the Mufti
 22 Sadik al-Ghariani incites killing .
 23 "And he described the brother revolutionaries in the
 24 Shura Council of Benghazi Revolutionaries who opposed
 25 the coup, he described them as dogs and other things.

1 "We remind the brother trustees that the said person
 2 called for killing and division in Libya back in 2012
 3 when he went to Libya which is documented by video and
 4 some members of the Libyan community sued him legally.
 5 "We request you to dismiss him from MIC as he is
 6 hateful and should not stay to avoid further division .
 7 "We will seriously follow the complaint and we will
 8 not be tolerant towards the one who inflames division
 9 among Muslims. Allah says (and persecution is graver
 10 than slaughter) ...
 11 "We hope you fulfil our request, and Allah is the
 12 Guide to the right path."
 13 There is a copy of a page of the document which is
 14 part of the email. Can we show that now, please, and
 15 then we'll come back to this?
 16 So is that showing details -- the relevant details
 17 have been blocked out, or some of them. Is that showing
 18 a page of the petition?
 19 A. Yes, sir .
 20 Q. And I think you brought a copy of the entire thing, have
 21 you?
 22 A. I emailed my solicitor, yes.
 23 Q. So could we go back to the first page we were looking
 24 at? It's the names. So among the 91 supporters of this
 25 petition, the following signatures and names appear at

1 number 58, Mustafa Abdullah Graf. Is that the other
 2 imam at the mosque?
 3 A. Yes, sir .
 4 Q. Number 59, Yousuf Alfaitouri?
 5 A. Yes, sir .
 6 Q. Is he a person that takes us back to some earlier part
 7 of your evidence? What's the relevance of that person?
 8 A. He is the father of the regular attendee who joined ISIS
 9 and Al-Qaeda in Benghazi and died there.
 10 Q. And was killed fighting?
 11 A. Yes, killed fighting, sir, yes.
 12 Q. Then we have Ismail Abedi and Hashem Abedi.
 13 A. Yes, sir .
 14 Q. So this is two of the Abedi brothers signing a petition
 15 in late 2014 calling for you to be dismissed.
 16 A. Yes, sir .
 17 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Are we about to leave that?
 18 MR GREANEY: I haven't left this overall topic, sir, but you
 19 ask whatever question you wish to ask.
 20 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I just want to understand what these
 21 people were saying and how much you agree with it.
 22 In the second paragraph, it's accusing you of speaking
 23 bad about some important figures of the Libyan
 24 revolution. Did you do that?
 25 A. No, sir .

1 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Wrongly attacking the pious
 2 revolutionaries and accusing them of terrorism and
 3 extremism, did you do that?
 4 A. No, sir .
 5 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Wrongly indicating that the Mufti
 6 Sadik Al-Ghariani incites killing, did you do that?
 7 A. I did mention in my sermon a religious leader who was
 8 inciting killing. I didn't mention the mufti by name
 9 and --
 10 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: But was that who you had in mind?
 11 A. Yes, sir .
 12 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Yes, so --
 13 A. I denied in my emails because I was under a lot of
 14 pressure. I was terrified by the death threats, I was
 15 isolated, and I had to deny it because I feared for my
 16 life .
 17 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay. I wasn't at the moment asking you
 18 about the emails, but fine.
 19 A. Yes, but he was in my mind, yes, sir .
 20 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: He was what?
 21 A. He was in my mind when I spoke to --
 22 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: And you believed that to be true, that
 23 Ghariani incites killing ?
 24 A. Yes, sir, and he was banned from the UK three --
 25 three weeks after my sermon for that reason.

1 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Right, okay. It says:
 2 " ... he described [that's you] the brother
 3 revolutionaries in the Shura Council of Benghazi
 4 Revolutionaries who opposed the coupe, he described them
 5 as dogs and other things."
 6 Did you?
 7 A. Dogs of Hellfire, yes, sir.
 8 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: You did?
 9 A. Yes.
 10 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I read that as they actually don't
 11 believe, the people who signed it, or they're saying
 12 they don't believe, rightly or wrongly, that the members
 13 of the Shura Council of Benghazi Revolutionaries are
 14 terrorists and extremists. So would it be right to say
 15 there are a group of people who have a different view of
 16 the Shura Council of Benghazi Revolutionaries to you and
 17 that they don't regard them as terrorists?
 18 A. I mean, clearly no one is going to say, "You spoke
 19 against ISIS, you spoke against Ansar al-Sharia and we
 20 believe those people are nice and are tolerant and good
 21 people". So they are going to manipulate, and that's
 22 what they tried to do here.
 23 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: But if the reality is, and everybody
 24 knows, that the Shura Council of Benghazi
 25 Revolutionaries are ISIS, no one's actually going to

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1 sign their name to supporting them, are they, as they
 2 did on the petition?
 3 A. They requested their names to be kept secret. That's
 4 why the trustees refused to disclose the names.
 5 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Right, okay. Just going back for
 6 a moment to the post on Facebook that we saw from
 7 Salman Abedi's father, I'm sure you can remember what it
 8 was saying; it was saying that the British Government
 9 would close the mosque down because of the sort of
 10 things you were saying.
 11 A. Yes.
 12 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: That may fit in with what we were being
 13 told yesterday; that there were two people fighting the
 14 civil war, there were one party being supported by the
 15 British Government and the American Government and then
 16 on the other side, there was the — supported by the
 17 Russians and I believe Iran is what was said.
 18 So clearly, or doesn't it look like, Ramadan Abedi,
 19 which is what we know him as, was believing that you
 20 were speaking against the group who were being supported
 21 by the American and British Government, and were you?
 22 Were you giving that impression?
 23 A. No, sir.
 24 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay.
 25 A. I think what he meant is they might be — when any

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1 controversy will be raised around MIC, that's why it
 2 might be closed. That's what he meant, I think.
 3 Nothing to do with Russia and the western ... that's my
 4 understanding.
 5 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay, thank you.
 6 MR GREANEY: Can I indicate that bearing in mind the
 7 interest that the inquiry has had in connections between
 8 the Abedi family and the mosque, and bearing in mind the
 9 evidence that we were given yesterday, we would be
 10 assisted by an explanation from the mosque as to why we
 11 had not received this —
 12 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I understand that, thank you.
 13 MR GREANEY: We can take that from the screen.
 14 We can see — actually, sir, I'm moving on to
 15 a connected but separate topic. If we are going to have
 16 a break, that's probably a sensible time.
 17 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Right. Can I just explain, so no one
 18 misunderstands, I am asking the sort of questions that
 19 I'm asking not out of any doubt about the witness or
 20 anything, but because I suspect that no one is going to
 21 be asking questions on the interests of the person who
 22 gave evidence yesterday, for example, the two different
 23 views. So whereas yesterday, we clearly had questions
 24 asked to test the evidence of that witness, I'm not sure
 25 we're going to get it in relation to this witness.

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1 MR GREANEY: Sir, that's an entirely fair point to make.
 2 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I'm not taking sides. I just want
 3 everyone to understand that.
 4 MR GREANEY: Everyone will understand that. There has been
 5 no Rule 10 request on behalf of the mosque, but I do
 6 know that Mr Henley was intending, together with his
 7 instructing solicitor, to watch the evidence today and
 8 I did indicate to him that if some good reason arose, he
 9 could always seek permission to ask questions. So
 10 there is an eye on this evidence.
 11 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you. So a quarter of an hour
 12 break.
 13 (11.17 am)
 14 (A short break)
 15 (11.45 am)
 16 MR GREANEY: Again, we were slightly longer than we
 17 anticipated. It was necessary for the witness to watch
 18 a video.
 19 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Yes, I do understand that, and it was
 20 obviously good that that happened, thank you.
 21 MR GREANEY: Mr El-Saeiti, I'm going to return to the sermon
 22 of 3 October 2014 in due course, but, first of all, just
 23 a small number of matters so that the position of the
 24 mosque is reflected in my questions.
 25 First of all, in the dealings that you were having

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1 around this time with the trustees, you appear to have
 2 been dealing with Mr Khayat; is that correct?
 3 A. Yes, sir.
 4 Q. We heard not from him yesterday, but from Mr Haffar.
 5 Over this period that we are particularly concerned
 6 with, so 2014 to 2017, how frequently did you tend to
 7 see Mr Haffar at the mosque?
 8 A. Occasionally.
 9 Q. Occasionally.
 10 A. Yes.
 11 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Sorry, what did you say?
 12 A. Occasionally.
 13 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Occasionally. Thank you very much.
 14 MR GREANEY: "Occasionally" can mean different things to
 15 different people. It's just one of those words. Would
 16 you see him on a weekly, monthly --
 17 A. Maybe monthly, every six weeks, every two months, yes.
 18 Q. The second thing. As you know, the trustees in one of
 19 the statements of Mr Haffar have drawn attention to
 20 a recording of you delivering a speech in Libya in 2012.
 21 I think you've had a chance to watch that video,
 22 probably previously and, in any event, over the break
 23 that we've just had.
 24 A. Yes, sir.
 25 Q. It's four minutes in length. You are speaking in

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1 Arabic, but nonetheless we'll watch the video because
 2 the mosque consider it's important that we should do so.
 3 A. Of course.
 4 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Right. Mr Greaney, I'm obviously aware
 5 of the video and the suggestions which are made about
 6 it.
 7 MR GREANEY: Yes.
 8 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I know that you have your own lawyers
 9 here and you'll have discussed it, but obviously I have
 10 no idea what the answers will be, but clearly he has the
 11 right not to incriminate himself if he thinks any
 12 answers will. I'm not suggesting they would, but
 13 I'm just indicating that he has that right.
 14 MR GREANEY: If I may say so, quite rightly. In fact, as it
 15 has now turned out, this video is referred to in
 16 the witness statement of Mr Haffar and is addressed in
 17 one of the witness statements of Mr El-Saeiti, so he
 18 isn't taken by surprise and is comfortable talking about
 19 it.
 20 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Good. Thank you very much.
 21 MR GREANEY: So could we play that, Mr Lopez, please?
 22 (Video played to the inquiry)
 23 Thank you very much.
 24 So I'm going to just ask you a small number of very
 25 simple questions, to which you'll be able to give short

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1 answers, then I'll remind you of what the mosque have
 2 said about this and then I'll ask for your response.
 3 First, is the person seen speaking in the video you?
 4 A. Yes, sir.
 5 Q. Does it date back to about 2012?
 6 A. Yes, sir.
 7 Q. Are you in Libya?
 8 A. I was in Benghazi, yes, at the time, yes.
 9 Q. And who are you addressing, who are you speaking to?
 10 A. Yes, that was a gathering about the election which was
 11 supposed to take place on the following day to that
 12 gathering.
 13 Q. So this was not a religious sermon, have I understood?
 14 A. No, no. No, sir.
 15 Q. The mosque, through Mr Haffar, in Mr Haffar's second
 16 statement, say this. It's paragraph 25, {INQ041953/5},
 17 paragraph 25:
 18 "The Trustees have now also been made aware of
 19 a speech that [Mr El-Saeiti] gave in Libya in 2012,
 20 which highlights his politics. We also believe that
 21 some legal action was being considered by Libyans
 22 against that speech in the [United Kingdom]. In this
 23 speech he is clearly articulating ..."
 24 A. Can you repeat that, sir, sorry?
 25 Q. Repeat it?

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1 A. Yes, that bit.
 2 Q. Of course:
 3 "We also believe that some legal action was being
 4 considered by Libyans against that speech in the UK."
 5 I can show you the actual page. Perhaps that's the
 6 best thing to do. The INQ reference is {INQ041953/5}.
 7 Just the top paragraph on that page, please, so don't
 8 display it until you're able to display just that
 9 paragraph, please:
 10 "The Trustees have now also been made aware of
 11 a speech that MS [that's you] gave in Libya in 2012
 12 which highlights his politics."
 13 And they're talking about the YouTube video that
 14 we have just all viewed:
 15 "We also believe that some legal action was being
 16 considered by Libyans against that speech in the UK."
 17 Was any legal action ever taken against you in
 18 respect of that speech?
 19 A. No, sir.
 20 Q. "In this speech he is clearly articulating an anti UN,
 21 anti-election stance and called on his congregation to
 22 kill and be killed, if need be, rather than accept the
 23 results of a certain election that was taking place
 24 at the time in Libya."
 25 So again, a series of direct questions, but then

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1 I will give you an opportunity to give your narrative
 2 account of what in fact was happening.
 3 In that speech, which most in this room will not
 4 have been able to understand, are you articulating
 5 an anti—UN stance?
 6 A. No, sir.
 7 Q. Are you articulating an anti—election stance?
 8 A. I need to explain that. I mean, first of all, Mr Haffar
 9 said:
 10 "The Trustees have now also been made aware ..."
 11 Q. Yes.
 12 A. This is untrue, because in 2012, we had discussions and
 13 we had meetings and they raised the issue of this video,
 14 and Mr Haffar, Mr Khayat and other trustees were there
 15 and they closed this issue and we agreed the mosque has
 16 nothing to do with it. So it's not, "Now we have been
 17 made aware", this is untrue.
 18 Q. So it was raised and resolved at the time?
 19 A. Yes. Regarding the election, now, it's — the best
 20 thing to do, I mean, regarding the video, I suggest, is
 21 to have it transcribed —
 22 Q. Right.
 23 A. — and then translated professionally and then
 24 I'm willing to discuss the contents, to come back and
 25 discuss the contents, whether it's today or another day,

1 no problem.
 2 So I was talking about oppression. I repeated the
 3 word "oppression", "oppressed", "oppressor" 14 times in
 4 the four minutes. There were objection at the time of
 5 the way the political system was designed after the fall
 6 of Gaddafi, and big segments of people were objecting to
 7 the election in Benghazi and they closed the election
 8 centres. So it was not my only opinion.
 9 I only addressed the issue from a religious point of
 10 view, that I said Islam, and then I quoted all Prophets,
 11 I mentioned all Prophets. I said "all religions" —
 12 I used the word "all religions" — promote social
 13 justice. And if this new political system after the
 14 fall of the dictatorship is not going to establish
 15 a fair system, then we all have to reject it. And
 16 I said at the end, the closing sentence, then we should
 17 be aware. I called for awareness, to be attentive, and
 18 not to take part in the election and even to stop it if
 19 we can.
 20 That's what I said. I didn't say kill anyone,
 21 I didn't say take arms and attack others. And the
 22 hadith, the Prophetic statement which I quoted, was
 23 clearly about a man who was attacked unlawfully by
 24 another person to take his wealth unlawfully and the
 25 Prophet said to him, "Defend yourself, even if it comes

1 to fighting". This is the tradition I quoted here; it's
 2 defending the wealth and the self against
 3 a transgressor.
 4 Q. So it's apparent that this is something that you feel
 5 strongly about. I'm certain the chairman will consider
 6 how important this issue is in the overall context of
 7 the inquiry and if he considers it important, we'll
 8 obtain a transcript and take you up on your invitation
 9 to come back.
 10 But the important issue, I suspect, from the
 11 mosque's point of view is the suggestion that you called
 12 on the congregation to kill and be killed if need be.
 13 Do you accept that you made any call of that type —
 14 A. That's untrue. That's untrue, sir. That's not what
 15 I said.
 16 Q. Did you make any call to what we've been describing as
 17 armed jihad during the course of that speech?
 18 A. Not at all. The word "jihad" was not used. I didn't
 19 call for religious war, I didn't call for military
 20 action. I only called to peacefully not take part in
 21 an oppressive political system until things are
 22 resolved.
 23 Q. Your position is, therefore, clear.
 24 A. Yes, sir.
 25 Q. But out of fairness to the overall point, I will remind

1 you of what you said about this issue at paragraph 8 of
 2 your own witness statement of 15 November of this year,
 3 so a very recent statement.
 4 We'll put this on the screen as well, shall we?
 5 It's {INQ042451/2}. It's the bottom third of that page.
 6 Paragraph 8:
 7 "Mr Haffar referred [you said] to a speech at
 8 para 25 I delivered to a gathering in Libya dating back
 9 to 2012. Mr Haffar's interpretation of its contents is
 10 inaccurate, misleading and untrue. The speech was on
 11 social justice and an oppressive political system.
 12 Within the speech I quoted a statement of Prophet
 13 Mohammed ... in respect of a man who was attacked by
 14 another and had his property taken from him unlawfully.
 15 The Prophet answered, the man can defend his property
 16 even if it culminates in him fighting the person
 17 attempting to engage in such unlawful activity. This
 18 principle is a human value and agreed upon by all
 19 Abrahamic Faiths."
 20 Is what you said in that statement correct?
 21 A. Yes, sir.
 22 Q. Thank you very much.
 23 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Can I just ask, were the elections
 24 promoted and supported by the United Nations? There's
 25 no reason why anyone should agree with what the

1 United Nations do, but —
 2 A. As far as I know, no, it was nothing to do with the
 3 United Nations. It was very controversial at the time.
 4 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: So who was setting up the elections?
 5 A. After the fall of Gaddafi before the first election,
 6 there was an interim government, and I think they
 7 organised this, I think, yes.
 8 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Right, thank you.
 9 A. Yes, welcome.
 10 MR GREANEY: That's all I propose to ask you about the
 11 video, so thank you for answering my questions.
 12 The third matter, before we return to the petition,
 13 is you told us that in the immediate aftermath of your
 14 sermon of 3 October, you engaged in a conversation with
 15 Mr Khayat during the course of which he was not
 16 supportive of you in the dispute that had developed.
 17 A. Yes, sir.
 18 Q. You did mention that you had also received an email from
 19 him; is that correct?
 20 A. Yes, sir.
 21 Q. And, again, it's important or may be important that the
 22 inquiry should see the terms of that email, which does
 23 refer to politics. We've had a translation of it and
 24 I think you yourself have made some corrections to the
 25 translation.

1 A. Important corrections, sir.
 2 Q. Again, if the mosque think that your corrections or any
 3 part of the translation is incorrect, we would invite
 4 them to draw that to our attention.
 5 I hope that the INQ reference for the translation is
 6 {INQ100081/1}. If you could put page 1 up first of all
 7 and I'll be able to see if it's the correct document.
 8 Yes. Could you go to {INQ100081/41}, please.
 9 This is your exhibit to your first statement, MES/8.
 10 It's an email to you on, I think, 7 October 2014, from
 11 Mr Khayat. Could we scroll down to the next page,
 12 please? It's about a page and a half. I think
 13 I'll read this out.
 14 So "Friday sermon", so it's talking about your
 15 sermon:
 16 "I wanted to recount here what happened in the
 17 sermon last Friday, its aftermath/consequences ..."
 18 And are the underlined sections in blue your
 19 amendments?
 20 A. Yes, sir.
 21 Q. "... and what took place between us directly after the
 22 sermon in your office, hoping that in my letter, this
 23 clarification and remembrance help to avoid
 24 strife / conflicts and disagreements in the future, God
 25 willing.

1 "The sermon contained some personal political views
 2 related to our beloved country Libya ..."
 3 Is Mr Khayat of Libyan heritage as well?
 4 A. No, sir, I think he's Lebanese, yes.
 5 Q. "... and there were names, for example,
 6 'Ansar al-Sharia' ..."
 7 Can you tell us what Ansar al-Sharia is, at least
 8 according to your understanding?
 9 A. Okay, Ansar al-Sharia are internationally recognised as
 10 terrorist organisation, including by the UK. They were
 11 involved in the killing of many civilians in Libya and
 12 the killing of the American ambassador in Benghazi,
 13 along with some of his colleagues inside the embassy.
 14 It is a faction related to Al-Qaeda. Their leader
 15 openly gave allegiance to Al-Qaeda leaders, and it's on
 16 YouTube. If you go to YouTube, you find an interview
 17 with the BBC Arabic and he openly said —
 18 Q. That's very helpful.
 19 A. Yes. Yes, so it is a terrorist organisation; it's not
 20 a political party.
 21 Q. Terrorist organisation associated with Al-Qaeda?
 22 A. Al-Qaeda, yes.
 23 Q. The email continues:
 24 "... and the 'Benghazi Revolutionaries
 25 Shura Council' ..."

1 Is that the organisation you referred to earlier?
 2 A. Yes, this is — it's a banner they made in order to use
 3 a new name, but it's in fact Ansar al-Sharia in — with
 4 a different name, yes.
 5 Q. "... where you described them as the dogs of Hellfire
 6 and you repeated that more than once, and also
 7 an indirect hint about one of the sheikhs in Libya
 8 (Sheikh Al-Gharabani — or so that what have been
 9 understood), which provoked the ire of some Muslims of
 10 the worshippers who disagree with your political
 11 opinion."
 12 Now, pausing for a moment, do you agree that you
 13 mentioned those two organisations and that individual in
 14 the course of your sermon?
 15 A. I didn't mention by name, but by indication.
 16 Q. Is it correct that you referred to them as the dogs of
 17 Hellfire and did so on more than one occasion?
 18 A. Yes, sir.
 19 Q. "After the sermon, there was some chaos, and then one of
 20 the worshippers forcibly took the microphone from me
 21 [presumably that should be 'from you'] and said on the
 22 microphone that it was a political sermon and that this
 23 was not acceptable at all. After that, some hubbub and
 24 verbal altercations occurred, and unfortunately all of
 25 this occurred on the greatest day of the year, which is

1 the day of Arafah, and on the greatest day of the week,
 2 which is the day of the blessed Friday, and in the most
 3 beloved place to God Almighty, which is the mosque."
 4 Is that an accurate description of what the
 5 cardiologist had done?
 6 A. He grabbed the microphone. He snatched the microphone.
 7 When I finished my sermon — when I finished my sermon,
 8 I remained sat on the floor, so the microphone was next
 9 to me and the cardiologist came and took it. I think
 10 Khayat wanted to make an announcement, regular
 11 announcement, and I think he took the microphone from
 12 him, as far as I remember. But he did snatch it without
 13 a permission, basically .
 14 Q. Do you recall whether he said that you had made
 15 a political sermon?
 16 A. Yes, I do.
 17 Q. It continues:
 18 "Then you and I went to your office and spoke At
 19 length about what happened. It is appropriate here to
 20 mention our phone call on Thursday, one day before the
 21 aforementioned sermon. You asked me during that call to
 22 ask Abu Omar ..."
 23 That is a name by which Mustafa Graf is known.
 24 A. Nickname, his nickname.
 25 Q. "You asked me during that call to ask Abu Omar ... not

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1 to pray for the mujahideen ... that are similar to the
 2 act of the Kharijites ."
 3 A. Kharijites .
 4 Q. Kharijites ?
 5 A. Yes.
 6 Q. The Kharijites being?
 7 A. Kharijites being — this is the main ideology emerged
 8 at the time of Prophet Mohammed, and all terrorist
 9 groups go back to that ideology, are offshoots of this
 10 ideology, yes.
 11 Q. Do you agree that you had had a discussion along those
 12 lines with the trustee on the Thursday before your
 13 sermon?
 14 A. Yes, sir , I did.
 15 Q. The email continues:
 16 "I agreed to your request directly and promised you
 17 I am talking with Abu Omar about this issue and this and
 18 after I heard from you that, unfortunately, there is
 19 a sharp political division between the Libyan brothers,
 20 I asked you and it was a special request not to address
 21 any political issue that would spark a dispute inside
 22 the mosque."
 23 So, first of all , where he refers to "sharp
 24 political division between the Libyan brothers", is he
 25 referring to a division between you and Mr Graf?

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1 A. I don't know what his intention is, but he's maybe
 2 referring to people who are pro—Ansar al—Sharia and
 3 people who are anti—Ansar al—Sharia.
 4 Q. Quite so. Thank you for putting me right.
 5 Had Mr Khayat made a special request to you not to
 6 address any political issue that would spark a dispute
 7 inside the mosque during that the course of that
 8 discussion on the Thursday?
 9 A. No. No, sir .
 10 Q. "However, unfortunately on Friday what you spoke in the
 11 sermon completely contrary to what we agreed upon only
 12 one day ago, after which the hubbub and altercations of
 13 words took place, you explained to me in your office the
 14 reason behind your violation of our agreement that on
 15 that day and after our telephone conversations, occurred
 16 several explosions in Benghazi, which claimed the lives
 17 of many Libyans, may God have mercy on them, and after
 18 we discussed this matter in your office at length, you
 19 gave me the pledge not to address political issues
 20 in the Friday sermons ..."
 21 And is it correct that a part of your decision to
 22 address matters in the way in which you did in your
 23 sermon on 3 October was influenced by attacks which had
 24 occurred in Benghazi?
 25 A. No, this was instance, always my — my stance, sorry; my

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1 stance towards extremism, yes.
 2 Q. "... and not to mention any political names and if you
 3 were to alerted the Muslims to something, the reference
 4 to it would be made in general, as our beloved Messenger
 5 of God, may God's prayers and peace be upon him, used to
 6 do, may my father and mother be sacrificed for him, he
 7 said, 'how is it that some people do this and that' and
 8 'how is it that some people say this and that', and
 9 those matters were to rectify the creed and behavior,
 10 not to insult this or that person. The summit of good
 11 character and mercy peace and prayers be upon Him."
 12 Did that form any part of the discussion that you
 13 had with Mr Khayat?
 14 A. I recall he objected and whether he said this, I think
 15 my response to him in my email following this, I refuted
 16 some of what he said. I recall he objected in general.
 17 He said, "You shouldn't have mentioned these groups".
 18 Q. "One of the repercussions of that sermon was that some
 19 Libyan brothers who did not attend the Friday sermon
 20 have heard about what happened, and they called me after
 21 I met you in your office and they were getting angry and
 22 threatening that they would hurt you if you go up into
 23 the pulpit again."
 24 A. Yes.
 25 Q. Is it your understanding that people who hadn't been

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1 present were angered and making threats?
 2 A. Could be Hashem Abedi among them, could be Salman among
 3 them who signed the petition against my sermon. I don't
 4 know who — who he's talking about exactly, but some
 5 threats were made at the time to kill me on social
 6 media, and that's what was the situation at the time,
 7 yes.
 8 Q. It continues:
 9 "I had a lengthy conversation with them and told
 10 them the reason behind your speech and that it was not
 11 accepted by the administration. I informed them that
 12 you promised me never to talk about political topics
 13 again, and that served to calm their anger."
 14 Had you, in the discussion with Mr Khayat after your
 15 sermon, promised never to talk about political topics
 16 again?
 17 A. In my response in the email, no. In my response,
 18 I said — I spoke about terrorist groups.
 19 Q. "I ask God Almighty that by this we have eliminated the
 20 strife between the Libyan brothers in our mosque and
 21 that there will be no dependencies or complications for
 22 that incident.
 23 "We also ask Him, may He be glorified and exalted,
 24 to reconcile between ourselves and prevent the blood of
 25 Muslims everywhere.

1 "Therefore, I ask you to exercise the greatest
 2 caution, especially in these difficult circumstances,
 3 not to engage in political matters or in matters that
 4 stir up disputes and increase discord. Rather, we
 5 should be advocates of goodness and bringing hearts
 6 closer [together]."
 7 And it's signed off by Mr Khayat.
 8 So the point that would no doubt be made by the
 9 mosque is that at the time, Mr Khayat seemed clearly to
 10 be indicating that he had understood your sermon to be
 11 political and was saying that to you.
 12 A. That's what he's claiming, yes.
 13 Q. And do you accept that it was political?
 14 A. No, sir.
 15 Q. Thank you very much. I'm going to return, unless the
 16 chairman has any questions, to the petition.
 17 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Just this. After that incident and the
 18 sermon, for how long did you continue at the mosque?
 19 A. Six years. Yes, 2020 I left, yes.
 20 MR GREANEY: As we know, among those who signed the petition
 21 in the aftermath of your 3 October 2014 sermon were
 22 two members of the Abedi family, Ismail and Hashem. Did
 23 you know any member of the Abedi family?
 24 A. The father was — used to be the caller for the prayer
 25 at the mosque. I think he left around 2009. He stopped

1 coming to the — stopped being the caller for the
 2 prayer.
 3 Ismail used to volunteer or work at the mosque.
 4 I don't know what was his, like, real position, like
 5 whether he was working, getting paid or volunteer, but
 6 he was coming, until 2016, I think.
 7 Salman was coming occasionally. I did say
 8 "occasionally" before, not very regular, but what
 9 I meant was maybe every six weeks, every two months,
 10 I would see him.
 11 Q. Are you talking about the period between, say, 2014 and
 12 2017?
 13 A. Yes. Yes, sir, yes. So my working hours — so I would
 14 work only certain hours during the day. The mosque is
 15 open from 10 o'clock or maybe 9 o'clock in the morning
 16 until 11 o'clock in the evening. So I only work certain
 17 hours. I finish around 3 o'clock, or 2 o'clock,
 18 4 o'clock. Then I don't know who comes to the mosque
 19 after that. So there's about three or four prayers, or
 20 two or three prayers after I leave. So I'm only
 21 speaking about the period that I work, and he was coming
 22 occasionally.
 23 Q. So in that period, Salman Abedi would attend
 24 occasionally and you've explained what you mean by that
 25 term in this context.

1 A. Yes, sir.
 2 Q. Ismail Abedi was volunteering?
 3 A. Yes.
 4 Q. Was he volunteering in the Madrassah?
 5 A. In the Madrassah, yes, sir.
 6 Q. And how regularly — bearing in mind that you wouldn't
 7 see everyone all the time, but how often did you tend to
 8 see Ismail Abedi over this period from '14 to '17?
 9 A. Weekly, of course, but I don't recall how many days
 10 a week, but weekly, yes, he was coming.
 11 Q. And Hashem Abedi, do you recall ever seeing him in the
 12 mosque over that period of time?
 13 A. In the two encounters I mentioned after my sermon with
 14 Salman, I think Hashem was with him, yes.
 15 Q. You have explained that their father, Ramadan Abedi,
 16 ceased to make the call to prayers in about 2009, as you
 17 recall it. Were there ever occasions after that, and in
 18 particular during 2014 and 2017, when you saw him within
 19 the mosque?
 20 A. I saw him a few times. After he moved to Libya,
 21 whenever he came to Manchester, he would visit maybe
 22 Didsbury Mosque, MIC.
 23 Q. In the period after your 3 October sermon, did you have
 24 an encounter with Salman Abedi?
 25 A. Can you repeat, sir?

1 Q. Yes. So after you'd made your sermon on 3 October 2014,
2 did you see or speak to Salman Abedi?
3 A. I never spoke to him, but there were two encounters.
4 One was in the corridor, I think he was with Hashem, and
5 he gave me a hateful look, so he looked at me with hate.
6 He showed me that he didn't like me, basically.
7 Q. Can you try to date that for us? How long after the
8 sermon?
9 A. I would say maybe a few weeks, maybe six weeks,
10 two months, yes. But there was another encounter before
11 that where he and I think Hashem were sat very close to
12 me, to the pulpit on Friday and, again, he didn't like
13 me. Clearly from his face he was not happy with me.
14 This was, I think, four weeks maybe after my sermon,
15 four to six weeks. And one of the congregational
16 members, he told me he sent his children to sit behind
17 them, behind Salman and Hashem in case -- he noticed
18 that. I didn't notice that. He said, "In case --
19 I felt they might do something to you, so I instructed
20 my children to protect you". Yes.
21 Q. So that's Salman and Hashem?
22 A. Yes, sir.
23 Q. Did you also have a conversation with their father,
24 Ramadan Abedi, or Yousef Hanaa, as you knew him, in the
25 period after your sermon?

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1 A. Yes, sir.
2 Q. Could you tell us about the circumstances in which you
3 came to speak to him?
4 A. Obviously when he incited on Facebook, say "congregation
5 should expel him from the mosque", that's the following
6 week to my sermon.
7 Q. Yes.
8 A. I don't recall whether it was maybe Monday, Tuesday. So
9 I called somebody. I said, "Can you get me his number,
10 his telephone number?" And then I rang him via an app,
11 communication app, and I asked him about his comment.
12 I said --
13 Q. Where did you understand him to be when you spoke to
14 him?
15 A. He was in Libya, so I couldn't call him directly. So
16 I asked him, "Why did you make this comment? Can you
17 explain to me?" And he said to me, "You spoke about the
18 brothers of Ansar al-Sharia. I know them, they are good
19 people." So then I told him I refuted them. I said,
20 "No, they are terrorists. They behead, they kill, they
21 commit suicide bombings." And then at that moment, then
22 the police were coming to check to me, so I said,
23 "I'll call you back". He said, "Okay". Then when the
24 police left, I tried to call him and he never picked up
25 the phone.

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1 Q. So he indicated that he knew people involved with
2 Ansar al-Sharia and he considered them to be good
3 people --
4 A. Yes, sir.
5 Q. -- which you disagreed with?
6 A. Yes, sir.
7 Q. So that's Ramadan Abedi. Now, just before I ask you
8 some further questions about Ramadan Abedi, we know that
9 Ismail and Hashem had signed the petition, and you have
10 described Salman's apparent reaction to it and also his
11 father's.
12 Are you able to say one way or the other whether the
13 father of the Abedi brothers or any of the Abedi
14 brothers was present within the mosque when you made
15 that sermon?
16 A. No, sir.
17 Q. So do you mean that they weren't there or that you can't
18 say either way?
19 A. I can't say. The mosque was full. Normally, when it is
20 a day like a bank holiday or -- normally the mosque
21 is -- the congregation numbers double, double the normal
22 number.
23 Q. We heard from Mr Haffar yesterday that there would be
24 a broadcast of the sermon. Do you agree that it would
25 be broadcast over some form of radio system --

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1 A. Yes, sir.
2 Q. -- and would be available within, I think he said to us,
3 about a five-mile radius of the mosque?
4 A. I don't know exactly how many, but I know they have
5 a system that broadcasts, yes.
6 Q. And did you know that the Abedi family lived and had
7 lived, I think, since 2013, in the Fallowfield area of
8 Manchester?
9 A. Yes, sir, but not -- I don't know about all of them, but
10 some of them, yes.
11 Q. You are quite right. There was a period certainly when
12 Ismail had moved in with his own family.
13 And you will know the geography of the area better
14 than I do, but they lived at 21 Elsmore Road, which
15 appears to have been about just short of two miles away
16 from the mosque. Does that sound about right?
17 A. Yes, I think so, yes.
18 Q. I said I'd ask you some further questions about
19 Ramadan Abedi, and I'll turn to that now. Is
20 Ramadan Abedi someone that you would be able to
21 recognise?
22 A. Yes, sir.
23 Q. So I'm going to show you two videos and, in between
24 showing them, ask you some questions about them.
25 I'm going to be asking you if you can identify who we're

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1 able to see in the videos and I'm also going to ask you
 2 whether you can identify what is being spoken about, in
 3 particular in the first video that we'll show.
 4 A. Okay.
 5 Q. I know you've had a chance to watch these videos today.
 6 A. Yes, sir. I did, sir.
 7 Q. And I understand that you will be in a position to help
 8 us at least with some of those issues.
 9 Mr Lopez, these are the videos that we watched late
 10 yesterday. The first is {INQ038817/1}.
 11 (Video played to the inquiry)
 12 Pause for one moment. First of all, do you
 13 recognise the three people seated at the table, or any
 14 of them?
 15 A. I recognise the speaker and the one on the left, on the
 16 left —hand side.
 17 Q. The person in the middle speaking is, in your view, who?
 18 A. Mr Graf.
 19 Q. And the person on the — I think you said on — do you
 20 mean on the left as we look at it or on the left of
 21 Mr Graf?
 22 A. Salman's father.
 23 Q. It's my poor question. But as I look at the image, is
 24 he the person on my left or on my right?
 25 A. On the left.

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1 Q. On my left?
 2 A. Yes.
 3 Q. So that's Yousef Hanaa, as you knew him, Ramadan Abedi
 4 as he'd previously been known?
 5 A. Yes.
 6 Q. We'll play this through to the end and you may be able
 7 to help us with what is being spoken about. Thank you.
 8 (Video playing continued)
 9 A. Excuse me, sir.
 10 Q. Pause for a moment. Yes?
 11 A. Can you just raise the volume a little bit?
 12 Q. Is it possible to raise it any further? I'm going to
 13 see if Mr Dunlay's team are able to increase the volume
 14 a little.
 15 In what we've been listening to, were you able to
 16 hear any names?
 17 A. Yes, he did mention Salman's father's name, yes.
 18 Q. Let's play on, Mr Lopez.
 19 (Video playing continued)
 20 Thank you.
 21 Are you able to give us any help with what was being
 22 spoken about?
 23 A. Yes, sir. It is a religious marriage ceremony. That's
 24 the marriage of Ismail with his wife, basically, yes.
 25 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I'm sorry, could you say that again?

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1 A. It's a marriage ceremony.
 2 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Marriage ceremony, thank you.
 3 A. Yes.
 4 MR GREANEY: Was it apparent to you whose marriage that
 5 ceremony related to?
 6 A. He did mention it. It is Salman's brother with a girl.
 7 Q. Well, I think there was only one brother that was
 8 married, but was it apparent which brother of Salman?
 9 A. Ismail. Ismail, yes.
 10 Q. Sir, on the basis that that is correct, and obviously
 11 the mosque will tell us if they don't believe it is,
 12 that very much fits with the date in July of 2015,
 13 because we know from Mr Weatherby's questioning of
 14 Mr Barraclough that Ismail Abedi was port stopped on
 15 return from his honeymoon a little later in 2015.
 16 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.
 17 MR GREANEY: So they do fit, but, again, we'll need to make
 18 sure we're absolutely right about that.
 19 The second video is {INQ038818/1}. We do know that
 20 we are going to be seeing a person making the call to
 21 prayer. I'm going to ask you again to see whether you
 22 can identify who that person is. We do, as you know,
 23 see a view of the person turning towards the camera
 24 towards the end of the footage.
 25 A. Okay.

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1 (Video played to the inquiry)
 2 Q. Do you recognise the person making the call to prayer?
 3 A. Yes, sir.
 4 Q. Who was it?
 5 A. It's Salman's father.
 6 Q. I want to —
 7 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: In the middle of the picture, sitting on
 8 a chair, was that the imam?
 9 A. Um ...
 10 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Would the imam who was going to conduct
 11 the prayers be there?
 12 A. I think one of the elderlies [sic], yes.
 13 MR GREANEY: The final issue I want to ask you about, again,
 14 is related to the reaction of certain people within the
 15 community to your sermon of 3 October. We're going to
 16 be dealing next with the person that you are not
 17 comfortable naming, so I'm going to deal with this
 18 carefully.
 19 Is it the position that within a couple of days of
 20 your sermon of 3 October, a person we'll call X
 21 approached you as you entered the Manchester Islamic
 22 Centre?
 23 A. Yes, sir.
 24 Q. Did that person criticise you for, as that person put
 25 it, speaking against the brothers?

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1 A. Yes, sir .
 2 Q. Did you understand X to be referring to the terrorist
 3 organisations that you had criticised?
 4 A. Yes, sir , he did mention Ansar al-Sharia.
 5 Q. Did he also question your rationale when speaking on the
 6 topic of agreement between democracy, its consultative
 7 respects and the consultative process of Shura within
 8 Sharia Law?
 9 A. Yes, sir .
 10 Q. Did he say that you made a very big mistake in speaking
 11 about that topic?
 12 A. Yes. Yes, sir .
 13 Q. Did you seek to challenge his attitudes during that
 14 discussion?
 15 A. Yes, sir .
 16 Q. But did X become argumentative?
 17 A. Yes, sir .
 18 Q. And did his views seem to be entrenched?
 19 A. Can you rephrase, please?
 20 Q. Did his views seem to be fixed so that there was not
 21 point in seeking to reason with him?
 22 A. Yes, sir .
 23 Q. So did you just walk away?
 24 A. Yes, sir .

Subject to Restriction Order

8 MR GREANEY: Mr El-Saeiti, thank you very much indeed for
 9 answering my questions. Those are all I have at this
 10 stage.
 11 Sir, can I say that if it were possible to conclude
 12 all of the core participant questioning before we
 13 stopped for lunch, that would help, because it would
 14 make a saving of time in terms of the arrangements for
 15 the restricted hearing. That will inevitably mean
 16 sitting beyond 1.00. It might involve sitting even to
 17 1.30.
 18 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Is that a difficulty to those getting
 19 lunch or not? Okay. I'm grateful for your tolerance,
 20 so we can fit it in. Thank you.
 21 MR GREANEY: And I'm grateful to Mr Cooper.
 22 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Are you happy to keep going?
 23 A. Yes, Mr Chairman. I will need to conduct my prayer no
 24 later than 1.20.
 25 MR GREANEY: Well, sir, we aren't then going to finish

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1 before lunch, so we may as well just take our lunch at
 2 1 o'clock.
 3 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay.
 4 A. Thank you.
 5 Questions from MR COOPER
 6 MR COOPER: As you know, I ask questions on behalf of the
 7 families. There's a number of issues I would like to
 8 cover with you, just for you to clarify us with, if
 9 you will, as best you can.
 10 Just a few preliminary issues first. From what
 11 you've already told us today, it was pretty obvious,
 12 wasn't it, for anyone with an interest in the news that
 13 young people, men and some women, were travelling from
 14 the United Kingdom to Libya, for instance, to fight and
 15 become involved in that turmoil?
 16 A. Yes, sir .
 17 Q. And it was also quite obvious, wasn't it, that young
 18 people were beginning to return to the United Kingdom
 19 and, to put it bluntly, were very troubled when they
 20 returned?
 21 A. May you repeat, sir?
 22 Q. Was there a realisation at the time that you were at the
 23 mosque that young people were returning from Libya
 24 potentially radicalised?
 25 A. Yes, sir .

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1 Q. Did the mosque, from what you know, have any approach or
 2 policy as to identify people who might have become
 3 radicalised?
 4 A. No, sir .
 5 Q. You've been asked questions by Mr Greaney about the
 6 Abedi family, if I can put it broadly like that. You've
 7 indicated what your knowledge is of that. I'll come
 8 back to Salman Abedi just a little later, but as far as
 9 Ismail Abedi was concerned, he was teaching at the
 10 mosque, wasn't he? Did you know?
 11 A. He was doing admin work in the -- in the school.
 12 Whether he was teaching, I'm not sure.
 13 Q. We have heard evidence that he was teaching Arabic to
 14 young people --
 15 A. Yes.
 16 Q. -- at the mosque. Does that jog your memory?
 17 A. Because I was not -- my work is completely separate from
 18 the school, even the working hours or places or --
 19 I wouldn't know all of the teachers or -- yes.
 20 Q. I understand. So as far as you're aware, and I'm not
 21 criticising you, please understand this, but as far as
 22 you're aware, you didn't know about that, of his
 23 teaching at the mosque?
 24 A. No, sir .
 25 Q. He was an adviser on IT at the mosque, was he; IT, an IT

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1 adviser at the mosque?
 2 A. I ... I assume doing admin work could involve some IT
 3 work.
 4 Q. Would the admin work that he was doing, from your
 5 knowledge, mean that he had full access to the
 6 IT systems at the mosque?
 7 A. Yes, sir .
 8 Q. I see. Did you know that?
 9 A. I mean, admin work in the Koran school means someone
 10 will have access to all students, their names, their
 11 details . This is admin work; sending them, for example,
 12 letters about opening hours, closing hours, activities .
 13 So yes.
 14 Q. So from your knowledge, Ismail Abedi would have had
 15 access to the names and addresses and contact details of
 16 all the students?
 17 A. Yes, sir .
 18 Q. And what's the age range of these students?
 19 A. I think they accept students from 5.
 20 Q. Up to what?
 21 A. Maybe 15/16. I can't be sure --
 22 Q. 5 to 15/16, all right .
 23 A. -- but they start from 5.
 24 Q. So if Ismail Abedi wanted to get contact details of any
 25 of these people, not so much the 5 year-olds, but the

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1 older younger people, it would have been easy for him to
 2 get them?
 3 A. Yes, sir .
 4 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Mr Cooper, I understand the point you're
 5 making. I think there's no evidence that he actually
 6 did that, just so it's not misunderstood.
 7 MR COOPER: No, sir, the suggestion we make is not that he
 8 did so, but the system in place was not sufficient to
 9 stop him doing so.
 10 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I well understand that, just in case of
 11 misunderstanding.
 12 MR COOPER: Of course.
 13 Another topic, if I can; meetings at the mosque.
 14 I want to take you back to that video that Mr Greaney
 15 put on the screen. I didn't see an INQ number on it,
 16 but it was the one with the 17 February logos on it.
 17 I wonder whether we could see that again, please.
 18 MR GREANEY: It's the hyperlink in one of the witness
 19 statements of the witness, I think his third witness
 20 statement. It was a Facebook video.
 21 MR COOPER: Thank you.
 22 MR GREANEY: There were three separate ones. Was it the
 23 first ?
 24 MR COOPER: It was the first one, yes. I'm grateful,
 25 thank you.

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1 We'll have a look at that again and I want to ask
 2 you a little bit about what we see on the screen. Let's
 3 wait for it to come.
 4 While we are waiting for it to come, this was
 5 a meeting involving the 17 February forum, wasn't it?
 6 A. Yes, sir .
 7 (Video played to the inquiry)
 8 Q. We can either freeze it or let it run. Let's pause it
 9 for a moment there, if we can. It's just paused at the
 10 moment when his arm's in the way, but I'm going to ask
 11 you to do a little bit of translation for us because
 12 I have absolutely no idea what the Arabic is there.
 13 We're always told to never ask a question you don't know
 14 the answer to, but on this occasion, I'll break the
 15 rule.
 16 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Not true of this sort of hearing.
 17 MR COOPER: Of course, sir.
 18 On that flag or poster, and we'll pan along a little
 19 later, there's some Arabic there underneath what is --
 20 not a flag, but the colours, as it were, of Libya. Can
 21 you remember what's said there or would you like to see
 22 it revealed a little more as we watch along?
 23 A. You mean behind the speaker?
 24 Q. Behind the speaker.
 25 A. I can't see. It's not clear.

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1 Q. Perhaps, Mr Lopez, you could try and get as clear
 2 a picture as you can of the Arabic that appears behind
 3 that gentleman.
 4 (Video playing continued)
 5 If we can pause for a moment. Does that help? Can
 6 you assist us with what --
 7 A. Yes, it is a translation of the English phrase on top.
 8 Q. I think it's Arabic, I may be wrong, but what looks like
 9 Arabic text underneath the colours on that poster.
 10 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: It says "Libyans for Civil State",
 11 I think.
 12 A. Yes, "Libyans for Civil State" in Arabic, yes.
 13 MR COOPER: Is that what the Arabic is underneath as well?
 14 A. Yes, sir .
 15 Q. Thank you. Keep that picture, please, Mr Lopez.
 16 We have some more Arabic behind there, where we see
 17 the poster which has 17 February. Do you see that? You
 18 see the poster on the same picture?
 19 A. On the right?
 20 Q. Yes, on the right .
 21 A. Yes, sir .
 22 Q. Can you translate that Arabic for us, please?
 23 A. It says, I think, "17 February forum".
 24 Q. Yes?
 25 A. And then "welcome".

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1 Q. Thank you.
 2 A. Yes, that's it .
 3 Q. Finally, for completeness, there's some Arabic writing
 4 on —
 5 A. Again, "17 February".
 6 Q. "17 February", thank you.
 7 And, again, for completeness, there's some writing
 8 on what looks like a white box. It's quite vague, but
 9 can you help us with what that may say?
 10 A. It's calling for donations.
 11 Q. Calling for donations?
 12 A. Yes.
 13 Q. Thank you.
 14 A. Welcome.
 15 Q. We can take that off the screen now. Thank you,
 16 Mr Lopez.
 17 You've given your evidence as to secret meetings
 18 that were taking place, as you put it, at the mosque.
 19 A. Yes, sir .
 20 Q. And you clarified that by that, and to include within
 21 that, you meant political meetings.
 22 A. Yes, sir .
 23 Q. And you indicated to the chair that one of the ways you
 24 were aware of that was because you saw people coming
 25 into the mosque and going to certain parts of it .

1 A. Going to that inside door, inside room, to meet there.
 2 Q. Yes.
 3 A. Yes, sir .
 4 Q. We've seen a meeting there that one could imply was
 5 connected to the 17 February forum, and we'll come back
 6 to that organisation a little later, but are you aware
 7 of any other political groups that had the mosque as
 8 a venue for their meetings? Any other political groups?
 9 A. No, sir .
 10 Q. I see. Thank you. Let me move on now to the petition
 11 and events surrounding it and try to put it into context
 12 as to what was happening to you during that period of
 13 time. Let's go back, if we can, to the petition, which
 14 is {INQ100083/1}, please, Mr Lopez.
 15 It's potentially a small point, but one that does
 16 interest me and I'm going to ask it. There we have
 17 brothers and trustees who are extolled by that petition .
 18 In the documents that you write, you write "brothers and
 19 sisters". Is that indicative of perhaps an approach
 20 where here we see, perhaps on this petition, it's male
 21 dominated, brothers, whereas with yours, you're more
 22 inclusive, acknowledging diversity?
 23 I'm trying to understand the rationale and the
 24 approaches of different people as to how it may indicate
 25 generally their attitude .

1 A. Okay.
 2 Q. I'll ask the question, finally .
 3 A. Okay.
 4 Q. Here we have on this document "Brothers/Trustees"
 5 compared to your documents, "Brothers and sisters".
 6 Can you explain why there might be a difference and why
 7 people may be deliberately making it a difference?
 8 A. When I deliver my sermon, I'm addressing ladies and
 9 gentlemen, so I will address them "brothers and sisters"
 10 because they were males and females. The board of
 11 trustees is only males, so they are saying "brothers".
 12 Q. I see.
 13 A. It's normal in Arabic.
 14 Q. I understand that. Is there, from your knowledge of the
 15 board of trustees, an open access for people to become
 16 trustees or put themselves up as trustees to be elected,
 17 male and female?
 18 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay, I'm slightly concerned about that
 19 as to how it's going to come into my terms of reference.
 20 MR COOPER: It's this, sir, and I'll move on if you don't
 21 think it'll help you. I'm just trying to tease out
 22 attitudes in terms of whether they are — I don't use
 23 the word "extreme", but whether they are of the more
 24 severe end of interpretation as opposed to the more
 25 liberal end of interpretation and as to how that may

1 play into the sympathies at the mosque. Now, you may be
 2 of the view, sir, that that's perhaps too tenuous,
 3 but —
 4 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Whether it will be included in my report
 5 will remains to be seen, but we will —
 6 MR COOPER: Absolutely. It might be too tenuous.
 7 I'm not going to spend too much time on it, but I am
 8 asking you about how the board of trustees is compiled.
 9 Is it a liberal approach or is it perhaps a more
 10 conservative, with a small c, approach in terms of
 11 diversity and accessibility ?
 12 A. Thank you.
 13 Q. Do you have a view on that?
 14 A. Yes, of course. It is a — there has been an objection
 15 from the congregation, raised by many members of the
 16 congregation, about trustees not being elected. So they'll
 17 bring each other, expand it, by appointment. So they'll
 18 approach someone, they can get along with him, whether
 19 ideologically, whether personally, they will appoint
 20 him, put him on the trustee board. There's no election
 21 at all in the appointment of the trustees.
 22 Q. So effectively, you get on the board of trustees if you
 23 all agree with each other?
 24 A. Exactly, sir, yes.
 25 Q. And if you don't happen to agree or you present yourself

1 as perhaps someone with a contra point of view, you're
 2 not made welcome on the board of trustees?
 3 A. You're absolutely right, sir.
 4 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: We can now move on, do you think?
 5 MR COOPER: I was going to ask does that attitude reflect
 6 generally?
 7 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay, well ...
 8 MR COOPER: If I might, but I'm in your hands.
 9 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: No, no, do.
 10 MR COOPER: Does that attitude reflect generally in the
 11 mosque? If you agree with the board of trustees and the
 12 controlling power group, you get on with them and you
 13 prosper, and if you don't agree, you don't get on and
 14 you don't prosper.
 15 A. You're right, sir, yes.
 16 Q. I will move on now, sir.
 17 Going back to looking at your petition, or their
 18 petition, I should say, against you, the third paragraph
 19 down, please:
 20 "And he described the brother revolutionaries in the
 21 Shura Council of Benghazi Revolutionaries who opposed
 22 the coupe, he described them as dogs and other things."
 23 You're clearly not in favour of the Shura Council of
 24 Benghazi Revolutionaries; that would be right, wouldn't
 25 it?

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1 A. Because they are a terrorist organisation, sir.
 2 Q. Absolutely, and I'm going to establish why you might not
 3 like them, but as a basic principle, you have grave
 4 objections to this organisation?
 5 A. Yes, sir.
 6 Q. And the chair has been asking you about whether these
 7 views are shared by others and whether there is a contra
 8 debate about them. Is it right, as far as the
 9 Shura Council of Benghazi Revolutionaries are concerned,
 10 there are a number of military or militias attached to
 11 it in relation to activities?
 12 A. Yes, sir. The Shura Benghazi is a banner under which
 13 it — we could say it is the banner for the coalition
 14 which consists of Al-Qaeda and other groups, and ISIS
 15 could be part of them or just cooperating with them, but
 16 Ansar al-Sharia, Al-Qaeda, definitely forms more than
 17 80% or 90% of Shura Benghazi. They're just a name,
 18 a banner.
 19 Q. A sort of umbrella group, effectively; an umbrella, as
 20 it were —
 21 A. An umbrella, yes. Yes, an umbrella.
 22 Q. — for others to be sheltered by it?
 23 A. Yes.
 24 Q. I just want to deal with but two organisations that are
 25 under the banner of the Shura Council of Benghazi

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1 Revolutionaries. One, of course, is the February 7
 2 forum, isn't it?
 3 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Not the —
 4 MR COOPER: Sorry, February 17 Martyrs Brigade.
 5 The February 17 Martyrs Brigade are one of the groups
 6 attached to it.
 7 A. 17 Martyr Group was — this was — you mean inside
 8 Benghazi or abroad?
 9 Q. Inside the Benghazi Council was an organisation called
 10 the February 17 Martyrs Brigade.
 11 A. There's so many, including Abu Abida(?), for example,
 12 which I didn't mention. They are even more extreme than
 13 ISIS.
 14 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay, let's just stop for a moment.
 15 I'm quite happy for him to answer things he knows with
 16 his own personal knowledge, obviously, but insofar as
 17 we're talking about things which may come under the
 18 definition of an expert, it may be Dr Wilkinson would be
 19 the proper person to ask. I just want you — if you're
 20 asking all these questions, can you make sure he knows
 21 his own personal knowledge —
 22 MR COOPER: I will, sir. Let me deal with it this way —
 23 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: And if you're basing this on some
 24 document, then perhaps you could supply me with one
 25 afterwards, only if you are.

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1 MR COOPER: Well, sir, you're going to not be surprised to
 2 hear that I've been involved with Wikipedia again, or my
 3 learned junior has, in the period of time we have.
 4 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Nothing wrong with that.
 5 MR COOPER: We can get a better document, but in the short
 6 period of time we've had —
 7 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: No, no, that's absolutely fine.
 8 MR COOPER: Perhaps I can just develop this one point.
 9 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: But personal knowledge from this
 10 witness, if possible.
 11 MR COOPER: Have you heard, and this is on the point, of
 12 an organisation called Ansar al-Sharia?
 13 A. Yes, sir.
 14 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: He's referred to them a number of times.
 15 MR COOPER: Yes.
 16 Was that organisation under the umbrella of the
 17 Benghazi Revolutionary Shura Council?
 18 A. It is the main body, the majority of it, yes, sir.
 19 Q. And given that that is — and that's from your personal
 20 knowledge, yes?
 21 A. I'm sure of that.
 22 Q. Yes. So that's one of the main bodies under the
 23 Shura Council and let's just ask, if I can, from your
 24 own knowledge, a little about Ansar al-Sharia. At the
 25 time of your sermon — we'll come on to the UK in

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1 a moment — at the time of your sermon in October 2014,
 2 Ansar al-Sharia was a proscribed organisation in the
 3 United States, wasn't it? Did you know that?
 4 A. Can you rephrase, please?
 5 Q. Banned, effectively.
 6 A. Yes, because they had killed the American ambassador in
 7 Benghazi and some of his colleagues as well.
 8 Q. Well, they'd claimed responsibility, hadn't they, for
 9 killing the United States ambassador in Benghazi? This
 10 is the —
 11 A. Who came to help. He came for humanitarian reasons and
 12 they killed him.
 13 Q. Yes. So this is the organisation under the Benghazi
 14 Revolutionary Shura Council —
 15 A. Yes, sir.
 16 Q. — an organisation, firstly, that claimed responsibility
 17 for killing the United States ambassador in Benghazi and
 18 was banned at the time of your sermon in the
 19 United States.
 20 A. Yes, sir.
 21 Q. And are you aware and can you confirm that in
 22 November 2014, but a month after your sermon, it also
 23 became banned in the United Kingdom?
 24 A. Yes, sir.
 25 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: That's all confirmed by Wikipedia,

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1 I'd like you to know.
 2 MR COOPER: Not just that, I think —
 3 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: No, no, I'm looking it up here at the
 4 same time.
 5 A. If I could add, also the religious figure I spoke about
 6 against and was mentioned in the petition, also banned,
 7 three weeks after my sermon, from entering the UK for
 8 the same reason, for inciting killing.
 9 MR COOPER: Thank you.
 10 I'm simply raising this, sir, but whilst we can't at
 11 the moment get direct evidence as to what other people's
 12 views were, this is the independent approach to an
 13 organisation under that umbrella.
 14 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Yes. No, no.
 15 MR COOPER: And you were speaking in your sermon, in strong
 16 terms, about the abhorrent nature of this group —
 17 A. Yes, sir.
 18 Q. — which, looking back at the petition now — go back to
 19 it if we can, Mr Lopez, {INQ100083/1}, and if we look at
 20 the paragraph three paragraphs down:
 21 "And he described the brother revolutionaries in the
 22 Shura Council of Benghazi Revolutionaries who opposed
 23 the coup, he described them as dogs and other things."
 24 So clearly, and we'll come on to people that signed
 25 this petition, but clearly the people, the 91 that

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1 signed this petition, disagreed with you about your
 2 views on the Shura Council.
 3 A. Yes, sir.
 4 Q. We go on, looking at the petition:
 5 "We remind the brother trustees that the said person
 6 called for killing and division in Libya back in
 7 2012 ..."
 8 You have dealt with that. You have answered those
 9 questions.
 10 A. Yes, sir.
 11 Q. "... when he went to Libya ..."
 12 And they refer to the video:
 13 "We request you to dismiss him ... as he is hateful
 14 and should not stay to further avoid division."
 15 Now, this video that's referred to in this petition
 16 is a video, I understand from Mr Greaney, that those
 17 representing the mosque were very anxious that you see
 18 today. Do you understand?
 19 A. Which one?
 20 Q. The video that we've seen of you in Libya.
 21 A. Yes, of course, yes.
 22 Q. Very anxious for you to see that and very anxious for it
 23 to be played today, were those representing the mosque.
 24 And here again is that video being referred to
 25 fundamentally in this petition.

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1 A. Right.
 2 Q. So, again, whoever was responsible for this petition and
 3 supporting it were again very anxious, weren't they, for
 4 that video to be highlighted?
 5 A. You're right, sir.
 6 Q. It may be a coincidence that the mosque are very anxious
 7 today about it, who knows.
 8 Looking further down this petition:
 9 "We request you to dismiss him ..."
 10 As I have read:
 11 "We will seriously follow the complaint and we will
 12 not be tolerant towards the one who inflames division
 13 among Muslims."
 14 Now, I know, for instance, people can express
 15 themselves in different ways and different people,
 16 different cultures and different groups can do so. But
 17 when you read, "We will not be tolerant towards one who
 18 inflames division among Muslims", how did that make you
 19 feel?
 20 A. I would put it in the context of death threats and —
 21 which I mentioned in my email to the trustees, I need to
 22 know who signed this petition because it could be
 23 related to the death threats on social media.
 24 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: When did you first see this petition?
 25 A. Only yesterday only. It was given to me yesterday, but

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1 I did request it in writing at the time.
 2 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I know.
 3 A. Yes.
 4 MR COOPER: And how long have you been requesting this
 5 petition for?
 6 A. Seven years.
 7 MR COOPER: You'll understand, sir, of course it would have
 8 been helpful, certainly for us, if we'd had this
 9 yesterday to have asked Mr Haffar questions about it.
 10 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay.
 11 MR COOPER: There it is.
 12 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I'm sure it would have been helpful to
 13 everybody.
 14 MR COOPER: I am reminded it's 1 o'clock. Perhaps that
 15 would be a convenient moment then.
 16 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay. Thank you very much. An hour.
 17 Does that give you sufficient time for your prayers?
 18 A. Yes, sir.
 19 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.
 20 (1.02 pm)
 21 (Lunch adjournment)
 22 (2.02 pm)
 23 (Delay in proceedings)
 24 (2.14 pm)
 25 MR COOPER: Sir, before I begin, STI and CTI are aware of

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1 this and content for me to deal with it this way, just
 2 to top and tail the questions I was asking this morning
 3 so you can see it in context. You'll recall, sir, I was
 4 asking questions regarding Ismail Abedi's accessibility
 5 to materials, addresses and such.
 6 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Yes.
 7 MR COOPER: Can I respectfully remind the inquiry of one
 8 document, please. This is for you, sir, just to assist
 9 you, {INQ030254/1}. I'm grateful to Mr Jamieson for
 10 bringing this to my attention.
 11 This is a officer's report on electronic devices
 12 recovered from Ismail Abedi's home address in 2017 and,
 13 sir, you'll cast your eye over [INQ030254/2], where it
 14 says this:
 15 "There are 93 files that are spreadsheets. These
 16 show the names of students and their parents, their
 17 contact numbers (mobile and landline) and email
 18 addresses.
 19 "It would appear that they are students of religious
 20 classes. The spreadsheets do not show which schools the
 21 students attend. Most of the spreadsheets are undated
 22 but those that do have dates are from 2014/2015."
 23 Again, if you cast your eye, sir, please,
 24 a paragraph down:
 25 "Amongst the 93 files shown above and of note

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1 are ..."
 2 And reference is made here:
 3 "This shows the name 'Ismail' as being one of the
 4 listed teachers on the spreadsheet."
 5 And it goes on.
 6 So if I simply -- if it assists you bringing that
 7 into context as to the questions, and when I made
 8 perhaps a premature concession that we were simply
 9 saying that Ismail Abedi had the opportunity, we would
 10 submit this document maybe means I probably undersold
 11 the submission.
 12 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay, thank you. He obviously forwarded
 13 it to his own computer so that he could contact people.
 14 As I say, we'll make enquiries whether there's any
 15 evidence that he did do so.
 16 MR COOPER: Thank you, sir. One other matter that's
 17 developed over a busy lunch --
 18 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Mr Jamieson is shaking his head.
 19 MR JAMIESON: There's no evidence that I have seen that he
 20 did that, sir.
 21 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay, thank you very much.
 22 MR COOPER: Thank you.
 23 Then one other document, sir, which I hope you've
 24 had brought to your attention, it's the proscribed
 25 terrorist organisation list.

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1 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Yes, I have.
 2 MR COOPER: Thank you. If I can very briefly refer you,
 3 obviously in your own time, but particularly to refer to
 4 page 7 of that document, which deals with
 5 Ansar al-Sharia in its various guises.
 6 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I have read it, thank you.
 7 MR COOPER: Thank you, sir.
 8 Sorry about that. I'll turn to you now.
 9 So if we can go back, please, Mr Lopez, to
 10 {INQ100083/1}, please, which is the petition.
 11 We were looking at that, you'll recall. Let's look
 12 at the bottom part of it, where we see:
 13 "Amongst the 91 supporters of this petition, the
 14 following signatures and names appear at ..."
 15 And we have seen the names, and three of those names
 16 are well-known to this inquiry. And you indicated that
 17 number 59 is the father of an ISIS fighter who was
 18 killed overseas; is that right? Have I understood that
 19 correctly?
 20 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: He was someone who's killed overseas.
 21 I'm not sure you can say he's an ISIS fighter, can you,
 22 or --
 23 A. Al-Qaeda. Al-Qaeda or ISIS.
 24 MR COOPER: I see.
 25 A. Yes.

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1 Q. Can you remind me -- I think it's already in evidence,
 2 but I can't recall what it was -- when, as far as you're
 3 concerned, this young man was killed? The year would be
 4 sufficient. If you don't know --
 5 A. I don't know.
 6 Q. Then I won't press you on that.
 7 These signatories are numbered. Do we presume those
 8 are the numbers they appear on the petition?
 9 A. Yes, yes. Yes, sir.
 10 Q. So it seems, and it's a matter of general construction,
 11 but I'll do it through you, that these signatures were
 12 obtained pretty close to each other, 58, 59, not 60 and
 13 61, and then 62 and 63.
 14 A. Yes, sir, they were in order.
 15 Q. Virtually, and I use the word "virtually" because we
 16 don't have 60 and 61, but virtually consecutive, one
 17 after the other.
 18 A. Yes, sir.
 19 Q. We don't know whether they were all together when they
 20 signed it, but it was certainly, apart from 60 and 61,
 21 nothing in between.
 22 A. Yes, sir.
 23 Q. Sir, we have -- again, what I said at the start of my
 24 questions this morning was I want to put this into
 25 context. So we had your sermon, we had the petition and

1 now could I take you, please, to your statement,
 2 {INQ035979/4}. This has been touched upon, but I want
 3 to develop it.
 4 Paragraph 7, please, page 4. There we have it.
 5 Paragraph 7:
 6 "A couple of weeks ..."
 7 You indicate it may be six, but it seems from your
 8 statement made nearer the time it was sooner after than
 9 six weeks:
 10 "A couple of weeks after my sermon against
 11 terrorism, also on another Friday, Salman Abedi prayed
 12 close to me. I knew Salman Abedi at this time and the
 13 family were well known congregants at the [mosque]."
 14 And you go and detail that. A little further down
 15 that same paragraph, you say this:
 16 "I believe Salman's brother Hashem was with him.
 17 During the conscious of the deliverance of my sermon
 18 I did not notice anything untoward but a friend of mine
 19 later informed me that he had instructed his children to
 20 sit behind Salman and Hashem to enable them to intervene
 21 should either of the Abedi's decide to attack me."
 22 So what we have here in context is you make
 23 a sermon, within, say, two weeks after that sermon, from
 24 what I read here, and you may be able to comment on
 25 this, Salman Abedi and Hashem Abedi seemed to be acting

1 in a rather intimidating manner to you. Is that what we
 2 draw from this?
 3 A. Yes, sir, but I think it's more than maybe three to
 4 four weeks, maybe. One or two weeks --
 5 Q. All right. Nothing may turn on that.
 6 A. I'm trying to recall roughly -- yes.
 7 Q. Thank you. Whenever it was, it's a matter of weeks, and
 8 do we take as a global impression from this paragraph
 9 and your evidence that Salman Abedi and Hashem Abedi
 10 were acting in a very intimidating manner to you?
 11 A. Yes, sir.
 12 Q. Not only intimidating by maybe demeanour, but there was
 13 concern expressed here, you say, that they might even
 14 attack you.
 15 A. This is what my -- one of the congregational members
 16 noticed from their moves. For me, I focus on my sermon.
 17 Q. No, I understand. In other tribunals, I'd probably not
 18 be able to ask the next question, but maybe in this one
 19 I can, which is: what did this individual say to you
 20 they saw to make them think that they were going to
 21 attack you?
 22 A. He said -- yes, he said he felt something is not normal
 23 and then he instructed his children to go and sit just
 24 behind them, yes. He said he felt something's abnormal
 25 and --

1 Q. He said what, sorry?
 2 A. He said their behaviour and the way they sat very close
 3 to me, he said, "I felt they might do something".
 4 Q. I see, thank you.
 5 Again, we may have already had this. Do we know the
 6 date of this petition? Do you know what the date was?
 7 Do you know?
 8 A. I didn't see any date, no.
 9 Q. Anyway, I dealt this morning with the concerns these
 10 individuals --
 11 MR GREANEY: What we do know is it must have been in
 12 existence by December that year because the witness was
 13 asking for access to it by that time.
 14 MR COOPER: Thank you, I'm grateful to you.
 15 Certainly though, again, to try and build around
 16 that, the anger in some quarters against what you said
 17 started immediately after your sermon, didn't it?
 18 A. Yes, sir, that's right.
 19 Q. And can one presume that they wouldn't have relaxed
 20 about that and this petition is probably close to the
 21 event rather than some time later?
 22 A. Could be.
 23 Q. Who knows. All right, I've pressed it as far as I can.
 24 Anyway, we have the petition. I asked you questions
 25 about the Council of Benghazi Revolutionaries and how it

1 seems the petitioners were supporting them. Let's look
2 at another document if we can, which we've already seen,
3 but link into the context. {INQ100081/1}, please. It's
4 the email. {INQ100081/42}, please. If we can expand
5 that if we can so we can see it, so I can see it at
6 least. Thank you.

7 Who is this email from again?

8 A. From the chair of the trustees of the (overspeaking),
9 yes.

10 Q. Thank you. Mr Haffar?

11 A. No, Khayat.

12 Q. Mr Khayat. I thought it was. Yes, I wanted to clarify
13 that.

14 If we remind ourselves of what's being said here and
15 what seems to be the chair's support or lack of it for
16 the petition, second paragraph:

17 "I wanted to recount here what happened in the
18 sermon [on] Friday, its consequences and what took
19 place ...

20 "The sermon contained some political views related
21 to our beloved country Libya, and there were names, for
22 example, 'Ansar al-Sharia' and the 'Benghazi
23 Revolutionaries Shura Council', where you described them
24 as the dogs of Hellfire and you repeated that more than
25 once, and also an indirect hint about one of the sheikhs

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1 in Libya, (Sheikh Al-Ghariani ...) which provoked the
2 ire of some of the worshippers who disagree with your
3 political opinion ... and there was ... chaos ..."

4 It goes on to describe that chaos.

5 And if we look further down that page, please,
6 towards the bottom part:

7 "However, unfortunately on Friday what you spoke
8 in the sermon completely contrary to what we agreed upon
9 only one day ago, and altercations of words took place,
10 you explained to me in your office the [reasons for]
11 this ..."

12 And you go on.

13 Did you take from that email that the chair of the
14 board of trustees seemed to be very upset, at the very
15 least, that you criticised the Benghazi Revolutionaries
16 Shura Council?

17 A. Yes, sir.

18 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay. I think he's upset about
19 fomenting political divisions within the congregation.
20 I don't think that you can read from that that Mr Khayat
21 is supporting it. By all means do refer me to things.
22 As I understand what he was saying was, rightly or
23 wrongly, "This has caused division and therefore, please
24 stop doing it".

25 MR COOPER: Thank you, sir.

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1 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: If a different interpretation can be
2 taken, then please do point it to me.

3 MR COOPER: Let me ask you this question, if I may. Did the
4 chair of the trustees give you any indication that
5 he was against the Benghazi Revolutionary Shura Council
6 and those associated with it? Did he ever say or record
7 anything with you to say, "No politics, that's not to be
8 taken that I support the appalling aims allegedly of
9 this council"? Did he ever distance himself?

10 A. I mean, in the Arabic text, he mentioned the names and
11 in the context, he's objecting to my describing them
12 in that way, in the Arabic actual email, original email.

13 Q. Did he ever express any support for this organisation to
14 you?

15 A. Explicitly, no.

16 Q. Implicitly?

17 A. They allowed venues for supporters of these groups at
18 MIC.

19 Q. All right. During the course — going back a little to
20 your sermon just for a moment, not about the content now
21 and the reaction in writing. I want to ask you about
22 the end of your sermon when things became disruptive.
23 It's a general question.

24 Was there any procedure or policy put in place
25 at the mosque to protect or safeguard speakers who might

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1 be the subject of the unfortunate events that you
2 experienced that night?

3 A. No. No, sir.

4 Q. No security, even in a low-key way, no control?

5 A. No, no. No security, no protection.

6 Q. Bear with me, sir.

7 (Pause)

8 A. I'd just like to elaborate on the security.

9 Q. By all means.

10 A. So there is a reception. When you enter the MIC, there
11 is a reception and the reception, sometimes like —
12 everyone gets inside has to go through the reception, so
13 it could be considered as kind of security, but it's not
14 like, you know, professional security.

15 Q. I understand that.

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. But if people became threatening during the course of
18 a sermon, there's nothing in the room itself by means of
19 the people stewarding it to protect speakers in any way?

20 A. No.

21 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Had you ever known it happen before,
22 what happened to you, someone grabbing the microphone
23 and being very antagonistic to you?

24 A. To me, it was the first time. I don't know about
25 before, what happened.

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1 MR COOPER: I want to move on to different topic now and
 2 I want to ask you, please, about the events post this
 3 atrocity and how things were developing at the mosque
 4 and how you were advised by a solicitor and by the
 5 mosque to conduct yourself. I just want to ask you
 6 a little bit about that.
 7 I'll take you again to your statement. We've
 8 already got it or had it. {INQ035979/9}, please,
 9 starting at paragraph 21.
 10 I just want to develop, if I can, with you the
 11 concerns you expressed in your statement about the
 12 advice you were being given and potentially any pressure
 13 you say you were being put under at the time. So we're
 14 going to deal here with paragraphs 21 to 25.
 15 You say this:
 16 "The Trustees reacted to this ..."
 17 Actually, can we have paragraph 20 for the context
 18 of it so we know what this is? Paragraph 20, please.
 19 So we have the date, 23 May 2017, the tragedy,
 20 at the bottom:
 21 "The articles [concerning the mosque] were published
 22 by The Telegraph [and other newspapers] and in greater
 23 detail by The Guardian newspaper."
 24 Then paragraph 21:
 25 "The Trustees reacted to this negatively and I was

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1 made to feel that I should not have spoken the truth
 2 when addressing the journalists."
 3 I'll pause there. What had you said to journalists?
 4 A. I said to journalists, "Salman came to the mosque,
 5 worshipped at the mosque. He didn't like me because
 6 I confronted terrorist groups, and he gave me a hateful
 7 look." There was some very small minority who were not
 8 happy with me confronting terrorist groups, and they
 9 were not happy. They were not happy. Why did I mention
 10 that Salman was coming? "You should have said, 'No, he
 11 never came here.'"
 12 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay, I just want to be a bit careful
 13 about this. They were concerned about you talking to
 14 journalists, rightly or wrongly. But did they actually
 15 tell you that you should have said something different,
 16 that Salman hadn't come?
 17 A. Mr Chairman, they brought journalists to my office,
 18 I didn't go to journalists. Mr Haffar said, "We were
 19 not happy with", but they brought them. Mr Haffar
 20 brought them to my office. I was inside my office when
 21 they came.
 22 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Right.
 23 A. Yes. So they were claiming they were not happy with me
 24 talking — about me talking to journalists, but they
 25 brought the journalists to me.

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1 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay, I understand that, and you told
 2 them what had happened with you and Salman, the
 3 journalists, all the rest of it. And they were then
 4 saying, "We're not happy with you having talked to
 5 journalists".
 6 A. Yes, sir.
 7 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: But were they actually saying, "We
 8 wanted you to have said the opposite, ie that Salman
 9 never came here"?
 10 A. Yes, indirectly.
 11 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: What does "indirectly" mean? There may
 12 be —
 13 A. Okay, they said mentioning this at all —
 14 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Sorry.
 15 A. They told me, "Mentioning Salman has brought other
 16 questions to us".
 17 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Yes, yes.
 18 A. And then in the meeting to prepare the statement on that
 19 day, as I mentioned here, the solicitor who was
 20 preparing the statement, Mr Hafezi, he said, "You
 21 shouldn't have mentioned Salman because it will raise
 22 other questions. It's better to say he never came
 23 here." He said, "It's better to say he never came
 24 here".
 25 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: That was the solicitor?

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1 A. Yes, Mr Hafezi, said this, yes, and I mention in my
 2 statement, to deny that he was coming to MIC.
 3 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.
 4 MR COOPER: And you're sure about that, are you?
 5 A. Yes.
 6 Q. Obviously, that's a serious allegation to make. Are you
 7 sure that the solicitor said that to you?
 8 A. Yes, in front of me he said that.
 9 Q. Let's look further down your statement. Paragraph 22,
 10 please:
 11 "When the MIC came under scrutiny by the media, the
 12 Trustees hired Mr Hafezi to represent them. I first met
 13 Mr Hafezi on 24th May 2017 with three members of the
 14 board of Trustees, namely Mr M Khayat, Mr F Haffar, and
 15 Mr Imad Al-Salam. This meeting took place in a room
 16 adjacent to the reception area. Mr Hafezi discussed the
 17 press statement draft which was to be read by
 18 Mr F Haffar to the media later ..."
 19 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Can you just hold on just for
 20 one minute?
 21 MR COOPER: Yes, sir.
 22 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Can I have some advice about the
 23 professional privilege in relation to this?
 24 MR GREANEY: I'll be corrected if I'm wrong by Mr Suter, but
 25 I believe that all concerned in these discussions have

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1 been consulted and no assertion of legal professional
 2 privilege is made.
 3 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you. I'm grateful. I just needed
 4 to check on that.
 5 MR COOPER: Yes, of course. I'll carry on.
 6 Obviously I am not making any assertion. Let me
 7 make that clear straightaway. I'm simply putting back
 8 to you what you said in your statement for you to
 9 develop, if you will:
 10 "Mr Hafezi told me that if any member of the MIC
 11 alluded to anything to do with my encounter with Salman,
 12 or his attendance at the Mosque, that would lead to
 13 difficult questions being directed at the Mosque. He
 14 went on to say 'it is better to deny'. This approach
 15 was adopted by the Trustees throughout, evidently
 16 manifesting in the MIC's misleading statement."
 17 What misleading statement are you referring to
 18 there?
 19 A. I'm referring to the misleading statement which I had
 20 a copy of, where they denied I received threats, where
 21 they denied political activities taking place inside
 22 MIC. That's the statement, 2019 statement.
 23 Q. As I say, I'm confining myself only up to paragraph 25,
 24 but here's paragraph 23:
 25 "My second involvement ..."

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1 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I'm really sorry again. Mr Haffar gave
 2 evidence yesterday. Was this ever raised with him?
 3 MR GREANEY: I'm sure it wasn't, sir.
 4 MR COOPER: No, sir, I didn't raise it.
 5 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I'm just concerned, as you well know,
 6 that people against whom allegations are made, and
 7 he was one of the trustees at the time, should at least
 8 have the opportunity to deal with them.
 9 MR COOPER: Well, sir, the essence of the paragraphs dealt
 10 with the legal adviser and obviously, if he wishes to,
 11 subject to your discretion, give his version of events
 12 and be questioned upon them, that, in my submission, is
 13 the proper person to be asked these questions of.
 14 The essence of what this witness is saying, between
 15 paragraphs 21 and 25, deals with his involvement with
 16 Mr Hafezi.
 17 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Yes. I mean, I've read it. It does
 18 also deal with the trustees adopting the approach which
 19 was suggested and the trustees being party to the
 20 conversation. I'm just concerned about fairness to
 21 everybody, as you're aware.
 22 MR COOPER: I understand.
 23 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay. Well, we will offer them the
 24 opportunity to come and deal with it in writing, if not
 25 in an oral hearing. Okay.

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1 MR COOPER: Thank you, sir. I'm in your hands.
 2 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: No, no, carry on. Please do. We're
 3 halfway through it now, so --
 4 MR GREANEY: I have seen an email that indicates that they
 5 do intend to submit a further statement from Mr Haffar,
 6 and I know that Mr Haffar spoke personally to Mr Suter
 7 yesterday and indicated a willingness to continue to
 8 cooperate with the inquiry and give evidence again if it
 9 proved necessary.
 10 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay, thank you.
 11 MR COOPER: Only if it helps you, sir, if you're of the view
 12 that you've read the statement and I can simply deal
 13 with this witness by simply asking whether he adopts
 14 what he says, if that's a --
 15 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I don't mind either way. Let me say
 16 there's already an inference from the evidence that --
 17 there can certainly be an argument and an inference on
 18 the evidence that the mosque have not told us everything
 19 you'd expect them to tell us about the relationship with
 20 the Abedi family. Whether this is deliberate or because
 21 people don't know is clearly not for me to make
 22 a judgment on, but there is that inference there and,
 23 of course, they'll be able to argue to the contrary if
 24 they wish. But I'm quite happy for you to do it. It's
 25 just, again, we have to have fairness for everybody.

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1 MR COOPER: I see the point. Of course I do.
 2 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you. You carry on now.
 3 MR COOPER: Thank you, sir.
 4 I'm not going to read the whole of paragraph 23, but
 5 just set up 24 and 25:
 6 "My second involvement with Mr Hafezi was earlier
 7 this year ..."
 8 And what year was that again?
 9 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I think we're on 24 now. We need to
 10 move down.
 11 MR COOPER: I'm on 23, sorry, the top of 23.
 12 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Sorry.
 13 MR COOPER: "My second involvement with Mr Hafezi was
 14 earlier this year ..."
 15 Earlier 2020 is that, or when?
 16 A. Yes.
 17 Q. 2020:
 18 "My second involvement with Mr Hafezi was earlier
 19 this year [2020], prior to my meeting with CTU officers.
 20 After I told Mr Elbeera on 24th January 2020 that the
 21 [mosque] gave false information in their statement and
 22 that I had concerns about this, he asked me for evidence
 23 which I disclosed immediately."
 24 So again, and I just want your take on this, what
 25 false evidence are you referring to there? What false

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1 information are you referring to there?
 2 A. In the statement 2019, they said, "We never knew this
 3 imam was threatened, we never had any issue on that
 4 point". So I went to the CEO and I showed him the
 5 email. I printed out the email and I showed him one
 6 paragraph in which I informed them that I was
 7 threatened, and I requested him to correct --- to write
 8 to the inquiry and correct this piece of information.
 9 Then he told me it was too late now, it has been given
 10 already. I said, "No, but you have to say the truth".
 11 This was later on confirmed in writing as well. I wrote
 12 to him as well to request him to correct it.
 13 Q. Looking further down 23:
 14 "Mr Elbeera panicked and repeatedly tried contacting
 15 me until 10.30pm. He sent me written and voice messages
 16 on the same day insisting I did not attend the meeting
 17 with the CTU alone. Rather, I should be accompanied by
 18 Mr Hafezi. He said that the MIC would only pay for
 19 a Solicitor to assist me, if that Solicitor was
 20 Mr Hafezi."
 21 Is that right?
 22 A. Yes, sir.
 23 Q. Paragraph 24, please:
 24 "I was pressurised into accepting this 'deal' [as
 25 you call it] with Mr Hafezi and met ... him on the

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1 6th February 2020. At that meeting Mr Hafezi told me
 2 that I was his client and everything I would disclose to
 3 him would be kept confidential. However, because he was
 4 paid by the Trustees, he would only represent me if our
 5 privileged communications were copied in their entirety
 6 to the Trustees ..."
 7 Is that right?
 8 A. Yes, sir.
 9 Q. "I felt extremely compromised and intimidated by his
 10 attitude because he stated that if I refused to agree to
 11 this he would 'put his jacket on and leave'."
 12 Are you sure he said that?
 13 A. Yes, sir.
 14 Q. "I felt compelled to agree to his terms because I was
 15 fearful that if I did not then I faced a real prospect
 16 of losing my employment at the MIC. In my opinion
 17 Mr Hafezi was clearly acting in the best interests of
 18 the Trustees as opposed to mine."
 19 Is that the impression you got?
 20 A. Yes, sir.
 21 Q. Finally, paragraph 25:
 22 "I gave Mr Hafezi an account of the events after
 23 which he advised that I do not meet with the CTU
 24 officers."
 25 To be clear, please, what account did you give

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1 Mr Hafezi?
 2 A. Can you repeat the question?
 3 Q. By all means. If you look at paragraph 25 ---
 4 A. Okay.
 5 Q. --- you say:
 6 "I gave Mr Hafezi an account of the events after
 7 which he advised that I do not meet with the CTU
 8 officers."
 9 What account did you give Mr Hafezi?
 10 A. We discussed the whole situation, what happened,
 11 misinformation in the statement of MIC, and then this
 12 was his advice. He said "don't". Then I said to him
 13 I would only tell them "if you give it to me in writing
 14 as a legal advice". He said, "No, no, I want it to come
 15 from you, not from me".
 16 Q. Let's look at the rest of paragraph 25, please. I think
 17 you touch on that.
 18 "Mr Hafezi insisted this communication should come
 19 from me and not him."
 20 Then you have a summary in your email, which I'm not
 21 going to refer to. We have the essence of it in your
 22 statement:
 23 "We were supposed to have another meeting in the
 24 next few days. I believe Mr Hafezi cancelled and
 25 withdrew from representing me because he was going to be

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1 placed in professional difficulties."
 2 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Well, you can understand that, can't
 3 you?
 4 MR COOPER: Of course, sir.
 5 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Presumably, the trustees are clients.
 6 He's treating you as his client as well. There's
 7 clearly conflict between his clients. It would be very
 8 difficult, I suspect ---
 9 MR COOPER: Sir ---
 10 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I'm just explaining that for members of
 11 the public who may not be as familiar as you are with
 12 what goes on with professional ---
 13 MR COOPER: Not at all, sir. The only observation that
 14 might be made is whether that was a little late or
 15 whether ---
 16 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I quite agree. It would have been
 17 a very good idea to have a solicitor who's entirely
 18 independent of the mosque.
 19 MR COOPER: If you bear with me, sir, I don't want to read
 20 the entire paragraph in full.
 21 (Pause)
 22 If you look further down that paragraph, right
 23 towards the bottom now, you say this, bottom quarter of
 24 that:
 25 "Knowing that I was an employee at the MIC, the

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1 Trustees put me under immense pressure preventing me
 2 from speaking freely to the authorities. I believe they
 3 did not want me to attend alone because the Trustees and
 4 Mr Hafezi feared I would expose them for their
 5 involvement in [as you put it in inverted commas] the
 6 'coverup'."

7 Was that your view?

8 A. Yes, sir.

9 Q. The word 'cover-up' is used in inverted commas. Is that
 10 what you felt was going on, cover-up?

11 A. Yes. Yes, sir.

12 Q. Then you say on Tuesday, 11 February 2020 you requested
 13 CTU officers Jim Power and his colleague to compare
 14 statements and you brought to his attention what you
 15 said was misinformation and inconsistencies.

16 A. Yes, sir. I didn't tell him explicitly. I just said --
 17 at the end of the meeting, I said, "Could you please
 18 read my statement and their statement and then ..."

19 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Yes, let's just understand what this
 20 issue was all about. The issue was about the mosque
 21 putting in their statement to the inquiry the fact that
 22 they had no idea about you being threatened after the
 23 sermon; is that right?

24 A. That's right, yes.

25 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: And that you were complaining about this

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1 misleading statement being made by them?

2 A. Yes.

3 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: And that's what it's all about.

4 A. Yes, sir.

5 MR COOPER: Did any of this include you mentioning or
 6 commenting upon Salman Abedi and his associations with
 7 the mosque or was it strictly limited, as the chair has
 8 put to you, to the incident at your sermon?

9 A. The general attitude in "don't say what happened", this
 10 was the issue.

11 Q. To be precise, don't say what happened when?

12 A. What happened before and after the atrocity.

13 Q. I see.

14 A. Altogether.

15 Q. So it's not just about, as the chair first asked you,
 16 events after the sermon?

17 A. No.

18 Q. It's about, "Don't say anything". This is your
 19 evidence; they're telling you, "Don't say anything
 20 generally about what was happening at the mosque" --

21 A. Yes, that's right.

22 Q. -- and about Salman Abedi and so on.

23 A. Yes, that is right. May I elaborate on briefly that the
 24 CEO insisted to attend the meeting with the CTU. He
 25 said, "You're not attending alone. We have to be

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1 there."

2 Q. One final question, which is nothing to do with this,
 3 and it's a stand-alone question. It's about the way
 4 people address each other. Abu Ismail, referred to as
 5 Abu Ismail by Mr Haffar yesterday in his evidence --
 6 sorry, referring to Ramadan Abedi, I should say. During
 7 his evidence, he referred to him not as Mr Abedi or
 8 Ramadan Abedi, but he referred to him as Abu Ismail.

9 Is that a sort of familiar thing that people say to
 10 each other when they know each other closely, a little
 11 more than in passing; a sort of quite -- implies quite
 12 a close relationship with someone when they refer to
 13 someone as "Abu", in this case Abu Ismail?

14 A. I wouldn't say it means necessarily a close
 15 relationship, but it is a friendly way of talking to
 16 each other.

17 Q. It's a friendly way?

18 A. It's a friendly way, yes.

19 Q. Rather than saying "Ramadan Abedi" or anything like
 20 that --

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. -- the expression that Mr Haffar did use yesterday?

23 A. Regardless of Mr Haffar, generally speaking, among
 24 Arabs, if I address you by your child's name, it's
 25 a friendly way of addressing you. If I call you by

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1 Abu Ismail, Abu Khalid, Abu Ahmed means -- it's
 2 a friendly way of talking to you.

3 Q. It means I know you quite well.

4 A. Could be.

5 Q. No, it's not -- I'm asking you the question advisedly.
 6 I'm not asking for a "could be".

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. And if you disagree with me, it is more than your
 9 prerogative to say so. So it's a sort of salutation,
 10 it's a sort of acknowledgement someone would give
 11 someone upon whom they were on friendly terms, would you
 12 agree?

13 A. Yes. Yes, sir.

14 MR COOPER: I have no further questions, sir.

15 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you, Mr Cooper.

16 MR GREANEY: Certainly speaking for myself, and I could
 17 always be wrong, I don't remember there being
 18 a reference by Mr Haffar to Ramadan Abedi as Abu Ismail.
 19 I do remember Abu Omar, perhaps, being used in relation
 20 to Mr Graf, but it may be that I'm wrong and we can
 21 check that.

22 MR COOPER: I'll check that and if I have misinterpreted
 23 instructions --

24 MR GREANEY: (Overspeaking) just thought we ought to check.

25 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: No, we should check.

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1 MR GREANEY: Mr Weatherby also has Rule 10 permission to ask
 2 questions and I'm going to check with him whether he
 3 continues to wish to ask questions.
 4 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Mr Weatherby?
 5 MR WEATHERBY: No, thank you very much.
 6 MR GREANEY: Sir, just before I turn to others, your
 7 attention has been drawn by Mr Cooper to the Home Office
 8 list of proscribed terrorist organisations, and the
 9 version that you have been provided with is that dated
 10 July of 2016. No doubt you've been given that version
 11 on the basis it was that which was in force at the date
 12 of the arena attack.
 13 The most up-to-date version is dated
 14 23 November 2021, although it describes the organisation
 15 that I'm going to turn to deal with in materially
 16 identical terms.
 17 Sir, Mr Cooper referred to it and you indicated that
 18 you had read it, but it seems to the inquiry legal team
 19 that there is value in reading out what is said within
 20 this official document about an organisation that has
 21 been referred to a number of times over the course of
 22 today. So may I do that, please, sir?
 23 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Yes.
 24 MR GREANEY: I'm going to read out the section that deals
 25 with Ansar al-Sharia-Benghazi, so AAS-B, as it is known,

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1 which translates as the Partisans of Islamic Law, which
 2 was proscribed, as the witness has described, a month
 3 after his sermon of October 2014, in November 2014.
 4 It reads:
 5 "AAS-B is a Sunni Islamist militia group that has
 6 an anti-Western rhetoric and advocates the
 7 implementation of strict Sharia law. AAS-B came into
 8 being in 2011, after the fall of the Gaddafi regime.
 9 The group was led by Mohammed Ali al-Zahawi and
 10 Ahmed Abu Khattalah is an AAS-B senior leader.
 11 "AAS-B is involved in terrorist attacks against
 12 civilian targets, frequent assassinations, and attempted
 13 assassinations of security officials and political
 14 actors in eastern Libya. On 11 September, 2012 members
 15 of AAS-B took part in the attack against the US Special
 16 Mission and Annex in Benghazi, Libya, killing the
 17 US ambassador and three other Americans.
 18 In September 2012, Mohammed Ali al-Zahawi, in
 19 an interview openly stated his support for Al Qa'ida's
 20 strategy but denied any links to the organisation. He
 21 also confirmed AAS-B had demolished and desecrated Sufi
 22 shrines in Benghazi, which the group regard as
 23 idolatrous.
 24 "AAS-B used its online presence to denounce the 2013
 25 capture and removal from Libya of al Qa'ida operative

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1 Abu Anas al-Libi ..."
 2 Pausing for a moment, we heard a little about him
 3 during the course of the evidence of Mr Barraclough:
 4 "... by American military forces. In August 2013,
 5 Ahmed Abu Khattala, a senior leader of the group, was
 6 charged with playing a significant role in last year's
 7 attack on the U.S. diplomatic compound in Benghazi.
 8 "AAS-B continues to pose a threat to Libya and
 9 Western interests and is alleged to have links to
 10 proscribed organisation Ansar al-Sharia-Tunisia and
 11 Al Qa'ida.
 12 "The US designated AAS-B as a terrorist organisation
 13 in January 2014 and the UN listed AAS-B on 19 November."
 14 Sir, if you can just -- I hope it's regarded as
 15 helpful, bearing in mind the public are listening
 16 regardless of how far I read that out, and Mr Suter has
 17 just sent me an email which I think addresses the point
 18 I raised with Mr Cooper. May I just take one moment to
 19 read it, please?
 20 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Of course.
 21 (Pause)
 22 MR GREANEY: Yes. So these were questions of Mr Haffar when
 23 he indicated in relation to Ramadan Abedi that he had
 24 performed the role of making the call to prayers and he
 25 said, this is page 119 of the transcript for Day 171

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1 {Day171/119:21}:
 2 "... they would invite him and say, 'Ramadan' or,
 3 Abu Ismail, 'please call for the [23] prayer'."
 4 That's probably as much as I need to say. So
 5 certainly there was a reference to Ramadan Abedi as
 6 Abu Ismail.
 7 MR COOPER: I'm grateful to you.
 8 MR GREANEY: Sir, there has been an indication, which
 9 I confess I wasn't completely clear in respect of, that
 10 there might be an application, pursuant to Rule 10, for
 11 questions to be asked on behalf of the mosque. Can
 12 I ask whether there is online anyone representing the
 13 mosque, because my understanding was that Mr Henley was
 14 not available this afternoon, who wishes to make
 15 a Rule 10 application and, if granted, ask questions.
 16 I'll pause for a moment to allow that to be dealt with.
 17 (Pause)
 18 That's probably long enough.
 19 So I'm going to ask finally whether Mr Horne, who
 20 I did not introduce earlier, but who is counsel
 21 representing the witness, whether Mr Horne has any
 22 questions.
 23 MR HORNE: No questions, thank you, sir.
 24 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.
 25 I have a statement within my bundle from a police

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1 constable.
 2 MR GREANEY: Yes.
 3 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: That is a statement which relates to
 4 communications in 2014.
 5 MR GREANEY: Yes.
 6 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Is there a statement relating to
 7 communications at the later stage, ie 2020 or 2019, the
 8 discussion we've been dealing with about the
 9 misinformation in the mosque statement?
 10 MR GREANEY: I can't answer that question immediately, sir.
 11 We are now going to have to have a break in any event,
 12 so could I establish the answer to that question during
 13 that break, please?
 14 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I just want to make sure we're not maybe
 15 confusing two particular interviews and things like
 16 that, so we clarify exactly what we're talking about.
 17 MR GREANEY: Certainly, sir. We do now need to go into what
 18 will be, I imagine, a short restricted session, but as
 19 you know from the very small number of occasions upon
 20 which we've done that previously, there does need to be
 21 a break of 15 or 20 minutes while the arrangements are
 22 made, please.
 23 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay, thank you.
 24 (2.57 pm)
 25 (A restricted session was heard)

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1 (4.27 pm)
 2 (The inquiry adjourned until 9.30 am
 3 on Thursday, 25 November 2021)

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1 I N D E X
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 3 Housekeeping1
 4 MR MOHAMMED EL-SAEITI (sworn)3
 5 Questions from MR GREANEY3
 6 Questions from MR COOPER91
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