

The Editor-in-Chief
The Australian
GPO Box 4245
Sydney NSW 2001
Attention: Mr Chris Mitchell

Sir,

Re: Headline of The Australian of 20th July 2009 titled “Islamic terrorism comes from within Islam” vilifying Australian Muslims

The Australian Muslim Community represented by the signatories below condemns the recent atrocities committed in Indonesia as un-Islamic and cowardly acts directed against innocent civilians. At the same time the Community is unified in disgust and indignation with the headline you provided to your Letters to the Editor segment on 20th July 2009. You have taken the view of just one of the writers of letters that you chose to publish, and made the statement your own by headlining it. You are clearly taking the responsibility for broadcasting vilification of Islam and its adherents, the Muslims of Australia.

As a Member of the Australian Press Council, you are fully aware that you are openly flouting Principle 7 of the APC Statement of Principles: "Publications should not place any gratuitous emphasis on the race, religion ... of an individual or group," and Reporting Guideline (No. 261) on Religious Terms in Headlines: "The Press Council has urged newspapers and magazines to be careful about using in their headlines terms for religious and ethnic groups that could imply that the group as a whole was responsible for the actions of a minority among that group." The Australian is flouting these principles with the knowledge that the APC - the self-regulatory body of the Australian print media - will not enforce its principles and guidelines to protect the rights and honour of a minority group such as Muslims targeted by your paper, but will stand by in support of its most influential media member.

You are stating in your headline that the religion of Islam is the source of terrorism and by direct implication that followers of Islam (Muslims) are dangerous individuals. In the first place, Islam does not teach the killing of innocent civilians, so your epithet, “Islamic” is unacceptable just as it would be to call callous Israeli soldiers killing unarmed women and children in the 2008 Gaza invasion as “Judaic terrorists” when the teachings of Judaism and Islam have the same source in the One Merciful God. Are we to label the long-term combatants of the Irish troubles resulting in atrocities between Catholic and Protestant extremists as “Christian terrorists”, when Jesus (upon whom be peace), who Muslims honour as a Prophet, came with a message of Peace to mankind? Islam itself is a religion of moderation according to its own teachings (Al-Qur’an 2: 143), not one of extremism.

Our monitoring of The Australian over the past three years shows that your vilification is not a “one off” but has been part of sustained campaign against Islam and Australian Muslims. We the undersigned organisations and individuals demand an open retraction of your headline of 20th July 2009 and a public apology for your clear attack on the religion of Islam and the hundreds of thousands of Australian Muslim adherents we represent. Please advise your response at the earliest.

Sincerely,

Ikebal Patel
President, Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (AFIC)

Ramzi El-Sayed
President, Islamic Council of Victoria (ICV)

Suliman Sabdia
President, Islamic Council of Queensland (ICQ)

Umar Yahya Batchelor
President, Federation of Australian Muslim Students & Youth (FAMSY)

Imaam Yusuf Peer
Council of Imaams Queensland (CIQ)

Dr Mohamed Abdalla
Director, Griffith Islamic Research Unity (GIRU)

Shumus Rane
President, Muslim Business Network (MBN)

Dr Halim Rane
AMARAH (Australian Muslim Advocacy for the Rights of Humanity) Inc

Aliyah Deen
President Al-Nisa Youth Group Inc.

Mustafa Ally
President, Crescents of Brisbane Inc

Galila Abel-Salam
Director, Islamic Women's Association of Queensland (IWAQ)

Rehana Bibi
Editor, Queensland Muslim Times (QMT)

Dr Iqbal Sultan
Brisbane Muslim Burial Services