

# Safeguarding or Surveillance?

## Social Work, Prevent and Fundamentalist Violence<sup>i</sup>

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### Abstract

*This paper seeks to critically explore the construction of the Prevent counter-terrorism initiative within Social Work in the UK, and to consider the implications this has for Social Work. We begin by discussing the conceptualisation of 'radicalisation' in the work of Arun Kundnani, one of the leading critics of Prevent, pointing to the limitations of this as a means of grasping the nature of Salafi-jihadi groupings. We then move to a discussion of the development of counter-terrorism policy in the UK, looking at the way the 2015 legislative guidance has re-situated radicalisation from a 'security' issue to a 'safeguarding' issue. We see this as significant for the way it has facilitated Social Work being directly drawn into the orbit of Prevent, with radicalisation being re-constructed as part of Social Work's concern with the vulnerability of children and young people involved in wider forms of exploitation, including Child Sexual Exploitation. We consider the reception of this shift within Social Work as well as look at evidence into how this is working in practice. We then consider challenges to this 'safeguarding' paradigm, which argue that this has involved Social Work being drawn into the ideological monitoring of Muslim communities: a 'surveillance' paradigm. We conclude by arguing for a critical defence of a safeguarding approach based on the harms which fundamentalist violence clearly represents to children and young people.*

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*'The ummah is watching while Iraq is being devoured. It's not going to stop there, because it's going to spill over into Syria and Allah knows where. In your own city, and in this country, many people have been arrested. You know if you talk about Guantánamo Bay and all this — there's a Guantánamo Bay in this country. It's an insult to Islam. Allah will revenge for himself, but the thing is, we cannot allow such things to happen and just watch.'* Anwar al-Awlaki - 2003 speech at the East London Mosque (New York Times, 2010)

## **Introduction**

On 14<sup>th</sup> May 2010, Roshonara Choudhry, a 21-year-old student who had recently dropped out of her English and Communications degree programme at the prestigious King's College in London, attempted to murder the Labour MP Stephen Timms with a knife at his constituency office in east London. Timms was very seriously wounded and Roshonara Choudhry was subsequently arrested, tried, and sentenced to life imprisonment. Justice Cooke stated the conclusion of her trial, 'You are an intelligent young lady who has absorbed immoral ideas and wrong patterns of thinking and attitudes.' (*The Guardian*, 2010a) Roshonara Choudhry claimed during the trial she had attacked Stephen Timms as a consequence of his role in voting for and supporting the 2003 Iraq war, but in police interviews undertaken after her arrest, she further explained her actions, stating:

Choudhry: I wanted to be a martyr.

Police Interviewers: Why's that then?

Choudhry: 'Cos, erm, that's the best way to die.

Police Interviewers: Who told you that?

Choudhry: It's an Islamic teaching.

When police asked her how she had come to adopt this understanding of Islam, she explained that it was through watching YouTube videos of Al-Qaeda's leading imams Sheikh Abdullah Azzam and Anwar al-Awlaki. She went on to explain to the police that:

...when a Muslim land is attacked it becomes obligatory on every man, woman and child and even slave to go out and fight and defend the land and the Muslims and if they can't handle like the forces they are facing, then it becomes obligatory on the people who live in ... closest to that country and if those people refuse to fulfil their duty then it, then it becomes to the next closest people and the next closest until it goes all the way round the whole world and it's obligatory on everyone to defend that land (Dodd and Topping, 2010).

How did this young woman who, despite her poor background had a promising future ahead of her, become inspired toward the adoption of these fundamentalist views? Could her adoption of these views have been stopped through particular sorts of state and social welfare interventions? What are the implications of seeking to influence the way young Muslims think about their faith, especially in the context of increasing hostility toward Muslims in the West? The 'radicalisation' of Roshonara Choudhry took place almost a decade ago, but since her imprisonment, terrorist attacks and the recruitment of young people to join violent Salafi-jihadist groups such as ISIS, Al-Qaeda, and their affiliates has become a fact of life in the UK, as have the counter-terrorist measures undertaken to combat these. Both raise many questions about politics, ethics, and effectiveness.

Contest, the UK's overarching counter-terrorism strategy, was initially established in 2003, with the 2011 revisions to this legislation developing the Prevent anti-radicalisation arm of the policy. Further changes in 2015 were significant for the way they have drawn Social Work practice into the remit of this work and the focus of this paper is on the construction of Prevent within Social Work. Critics of these policies have characterised them as fanning the flames of anti-Muslim racism and 'Islamaphobia', cheered on by a right-wing press and new forms of anti-Muslim politics asserting their far-right agenda as an expression of 'patriotism' (Booth, 2017). Cowden and Singh note that state policy toward Muslim communities itself seems to give very mixed messages:

There is...a curious double movement where on one hand faith is held up by politicians, policy makers and religious leaders themselves as a great and positive force in the promotion of social cohesion. But as ongoing revelations of 'jihadi brides' and Asian youth travelling to Syria to join ISIS continue to hit the headlines, the prominence of Islam comes to be seen as evidence of how these communities are insufficiently 'British' and thus a source of social in-cohesion. In public life, Muslims now have to justify themselves, and it is this that results in what has been described as... 'conditional or earned citizenship'.  
(Cowden & Singh, 2016: 4)

Across Europe, neo-fascist groupings have returned to the streets in larger numbers than for several decades, re-animated with slogans about the 'Islamification' of their respective countries (see Chakelian, 2017). This is the context in which fundamentalist violence explodes into public consciousness, with images of beheadings, bombings of trains and buses and cars driven headlong toward pedestrians, entirely reinforcing this perception.

It is in this 'bleak dynamic environment' (Bhatt, 2017: 2) that counter-terrorist strategies and policies like Prevent are situated. While this policy has raised justified concerns about the curtailment of civil liberties, the development of exclusionary conceptions of citizenship, and police surveillance of Muslim communities, a central issue we want to raise here is the silence amongst progressive left and human rights focused opinion about fundamentalist Islam and, particularly in the context of this article, Salafi-jihadism as both a political movement and a political ideology. Indeed, many of the left have sought to make common cause with Islamist groupings, such as CAGE, not least on the basis of their opposition to Prevent (see Cowden, 2016 and Bhatt, 2017)<sup>ii</sup>. This creates a situation where the most likely place to find serious critical scrutiny of Islamist groups – their funding, influence, and political links – is in the right-wing and xenophobic pages of newspapers like the *Sunday Times* and *The Daily Telegraph*. For progressives, it is as though to speak of these issues would be to give succour to anti-Muslim racism. But can't the regressive nature of the fundamentalist agenda be challenged from an anti-racist perspective? Why is the recruitment of young people like Roshonara Choudhry into the way of thinking that led her to act as she did, not equally condemned by those on the Left? This leads us to the question which is the focus of this discussion – what is the place of Social Work, a profession which claims concerns about equality and human rights, within this debate? Our argument is that it is crucial to mark out a space in which it is possible to talk about issues of racism and be alert to civil liberties concerns and, at the same time, to talk about the real political significance and the real danger represented by Salafi-jihadism. This is important because the ideology and tactics of these groups need to be taken seriously – both as phenomena in their own right, but also for the harms these clearly represent. We see this as representing a major challenge for Social Work.

Within this article, we want to focus on a particular form of fundamentalist Islam known as Salafi-jihadism. There are two components to this term, important as Salafi-jihadism itself is a development within Salafism. Salafism is a Sunni Islamic revival movement whose adherents 'claim to emulate "the pious predecessors" (the first three generations of Muslims from the 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> century) as closely and in as many spheres of life as possible' (Oxford Research Encyclopaedia of Religion, n.d.). There are many contributors to this school of thought. A key figure is Muhammed ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703-1792), a classically trained Arabian Sunni scholar. Wahhabi doctrine gained huge traction through political alliances between his clerical followers and the ruling royal House of Al-Saud and, when the modern state of Saudi Arabia formed in 1932, these ideas became central to the constitution of Saudi society. The vast petro-dollar wealth of the Saudi government has allowed this deeply conservative conception of Islam to be propagated throughout the world. Thomas Hegghammer has noted that, while there are diverse tendencies within Salafism, what generally defines this is a highly 'literalist and more puritan approach to Islamic doctrine and practice' (Hegghammer, 2009: 249). Even though the term has become associated with terrorism in the public mind, it is important to note that, while Salafism as a whole is highly dogmatic and sectarian, most Salafists are non-violent. Salafi-jihadists have separated themselves from the main body of Salafism in order to make the argument that the only way to realise God's sovereignty on earth is to violently overturn the contemporary global political order.<sup>iii</sup> Nothing expresses this argument more clearly than the statement in Al Qaeda's 2003 Manifesto: 'We believe that the ruler who does not rule in accordance with God's revelation, as well as his supporters, are infidel apostates... Armed and violent rebellion against them is an individual duty on every Muslim' (Maher, 2017: 11).

Central to the argument presented here is that it is crucial to distinguish between the multiple forms of Islam practised in the UK today and the specific nature of Salafi-jihadist fundamentalism. Once we can grasp this, it becomes possible to understand the opposition to Salafi-jihadism from within Islam. The Iranian Quranic scholar and writer Navid Kermani has spoken out against Saudi sponsorship of Salafism as a travesty of the 'multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-cultural Orient':

Sponsored with billions from the oil industry [this is] a school of thought that has been promoted for decades in mosques, in books and on television that declares all people from all other religions heretics, and reviles, terrorises, disparages and insults them...That such a religious fascism even became conceivable, that IS finds so many fighters and even more sympathisers... - that is not the beginning, but rather the end point of a long decline...of religious thought (2015: 80-81).

The work of Karima Bennoune has powerfully documented resistance to fundamentalist violence from Muslims across the world in her book 'Your Fatwa Does Not Apply Here' (2013). As she notes, 'Many people of Muslim heritage are staunch opponents of fundamentalism and terrorism, for good reason... they are much more likely to be the targets. Only 15% of Al Qaeda's victims in 2004-08 were westerners' (Bennoune, 2014). In the UK, Sara Khan, who now leads the new government Commission for Countering Extremism, has described the work of anti-fundamentalist campaign 'Making A Stand' which, with funding from Prevent, has:

visited hundreds of Muslim women in 9 cities across the UK and which taught mothers theological counter-narratives to extremist ideology and how they can safeguard their children against radicalisation...We delivered this campaign because of the high demand; these same women did not feel that 'representative' Muslim organisations or mosques were providing them with such support (Khan, 2016)

Understanding the significance of these arguments does not mean approaching Prevent uncritically, but it could shift the way we understand Social Work's involvement in Prevent.

We begin our discussion with one of the most widely cited critics of Prevent, Arun Kundnani, who situates this as a policy seeking to enforce a pro-Western ideological conformity among British Muslims. We then move to a discussion of Prevent and its 2015 revision, which drew the profession of Social Work into this area of work. We characterise the debate within Social Work in terms of two paradigms – 'Safeguarding' versus 'Surveillance'. We look firstly at the 'Safeguarding' approach, which situates concern around the contested concept of 'radicalisation' through a focus on the vulnerability of young people recruited into fundamentalist violence and the harms done to them as a consequence. We then consider two important critiques of this within the Social Work literature, firstly, from Jo Finch and David McKendrick (2017) and secondly, from Surinder Guru and Tony Stanley (2015). This work argues that, rather than a legitimate extension of Social Work's focus on 'risk', Prevent represents the recruitment of Social Work into a strategy of state surveillance. We conclude by critically evaluating this debate and setting out a third position which argues for a critical defence of a safeguarding approach based on the harms which fundamentalist violence represents to children and young people. However, we reject the idea that this is a question of 'British values'. Rather, we argue that the position is based on the understanding that Salafi-jihadism is a political movement of the extreme right, akin to white supremacist neo-fascist groupings which are increasingly also the object of Prevent. We conceptualise the growth of both of these sorts of violent fascistic politics within the context of the ongoing crisis of neoliberal capitalism and welfare retrenchment; not reducible to it, but part of the conditions which frame the 'vulnerability' of people drawn into these forms of political agency. We conclude by outlining some alternative



policy directions which concern the need to develop a wider and more politically formed analysis of fundamentalist violence, and the need to combat this through a positive, political project of a democratisation and social rights, including particularly the rights of women, as the basis of this.

### **Counter-terrorism: a new Cold War?**

How was the young Roshonara Choudhry drawn into the world of Salafijihadism? Questions like this have emerged as a central theme in the attempt by state agencies wanting to do more than simply respond to violent attacks on public space, but are also trying to prevent people being recruited into the networks which are supportive of this violence. This has led to the creation of 'Radicalisation Studies', a new body of knowledge created through the work of think tanks, university research departments, and counter-terrorist agencies. Arun Kundnani notes that:

In the context of the evolving 'war on terror', this new discussion of radicalisation could present itself as the wider, more liberal alternative to the simple accounts of terrorism offered immediately after 9/11. It acknowledged that terrorism was a problem which could be investigated, analysed and subjected to policy solutions beyond the use of physical force. In actuality, however, the radicalisation discourse was, from the beginning, circumscribed by the demands of the counter-terrorist policy-makers rather than an attempt to study objectively how terrorism comes into being... constraining the intellectual process to the needs of government security establishments (2012: 5)

In his 2012 article 'Radicalisation: the journey of a concept', subsequently incorporated in his 2014 book *The Muslims Are Coming*, Kundnani sets out the failures of the way Radicalisation Studies has conceptualised the reasons for why individuals are drawn to violent forms of Islamic fundamentalism. His central argument is that their work represents a profound misdiagnosis of the problem, as the answers they have come up

with 'exclude ascribing any causative role to the actions of western governments or their allies in other parts of the world' (Kundnani, 2012: 5). Hence, the modelling of 'the process by which an individual was thought to become a supporter of the extremist ideologies thought to lie behind terrorist violence' (Kundnani, 2012: 6) is constructed by removing from consideration what he argues to be the central motivational factor. As a result, what emerges are anti-radicalisation strategies in which:

Muslims are to be won over to a pro-western 'narrative' using the same ideological approach that has been favoured in the early cold war. An ideological battle against radical Islamism thus becomes the new anti-communism, with 'moderate Muslims' the new non-communist Left whom the CIA had sought to recruit against Moscow in the 1950s (Kundnani, 2012: 16)

Prevent, according to Kundnani, is thus part of a new Cold War in which the spectre of Communism has been replaced by a spectre of Radical Islam. And because initiatives such as Prevent are founded on this flawed understanding of the problem, they have come to treat entire Muslim communities as 'suspect communities', resulting in policies which have caused 'discrimination and unwarranted restrictions in civil liberties' (Kundnani, 2012: 8). In a more recent interview in which he develops his analysis of the politics and ideology of Salafi-jihadist groups, Kundnani argues:

What draws recruits to ISIS is not so much religious ideology as an image of war between the west and Islam. This is a narrative of two fixed identities engaged in a global battle: truth and justice on one side; lies, depravity and corruption on the other. These recruits are not corrupted by ideology but by the end of ideology: they have grown up in the era of Francis Fukuyama's 'end of history', of no alternatives to capitalist globalisation. They have known no critique, only conspiracy theory, and are drawn to apocalyptic rather than popular struggle. Nevertheless, for all its lack of actual political content, the narrative of

global war against the west feels to its adherents like an answer to the violence of racism, poverty and empire (2015).

### **Fundamentalist Violence**

Kundnani's work has been significant because he was both an early critic of the programme but also one who has had a real influence outside academia, particularly within anti-racist activism, where his characterisation of Prevent as a form of anti-Muslim state racism is influential. While there is certainly truth in Kundnani's claim that much of the research into radicalisation is funded by agencies which are close to the US and Israeli governments, we would argue that Kundnani is too cavalier in his dismissal of this material.<sup>iv</sup> There is within this body of work material which is itself critical of the reductionist accounts of radicalisation which Kundnani is criticising (see for example Silke, 2008; Schmid, 2013; Rausch, 2015; and Rahimi & Graumans, 2015)<sup>v</sup>. However, our fundamental disagreement with Kundnani is his claim that radicalisation is essentially and primarily driven by opposition to the actions of Western governments. Across the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia, thousands of people are involved in Salafi-jihadist groups – is all of this simply a reaction to Western governments? Is there not a problem with an 'anti-imperialist' analysis which argues, as Chetan Bhatt notes, that 'there is no authentic non-Western political agency unless it is as a reaction to the West's cultural or military aggression?' (2017: 12). While Kundnani is clearly critical of the 'conspiracy theories' upon which he sees Salafi-jihadist movements as based, he implicitly endorses the 'anti-imperialist' nature of their politics, as though they are right but for the wrong reasons. However, as Bhatt has argued, such a view is only possible if one completely disregards 'the massive opposition to salafi-jihadis in the Middle East, north Africa and south Asia' formed as a consequence of the extreme violence toward civilian populations in those countries (2014: 26). Similarly, if we consider the case of Roshonara Choudhry, it was clear that al-Awlaki's arguments

against the Iraq war were important, but how does this explain her desire to die as ‘a martyr’? If her concern was simply with the Iraq War, Choudhry could have visited Timms at his office and argued with him, or demonstrated against the war outside his surgery<sup>vi</sup>. In fact, her motivation as she described it to the police was entirely consistent with Salafi-jihadist thinking, in which ‘visceral violence’ and death by martyrdom are expressions of virtue (Bhatt, 2014: 26). The Al-Qaeda leader in Iraq Abu Al-Zaqawi emphasised this centrality of ideology in their project when he stated that:

‘They [the American Armed Forces] think that we fight for money and prestige – what they do not understand is that our arteries are filled with the ideology of jihad.’ (Maher, 2017: 21)

In other words, by characterising radicalisation primarily as a reaction to social and economic factors, Kundnani entirely fails to grasp the way Salafi-jihadism is ‘not only a system of ideas but an aesthetic and cultural universe of meaning’ (Bhatt, 2014: 27). Adherents like Roshonara Choudhry earnestly and consciously adopted this, and it is significant in her case, as with others, that this had no basis in concerns around ‘racism, poverty and Empire’.

While these movements gain support and recruits by interpolating economic, political, and social crises, they do so through a specifically religious language of salvation and virtue, in which acts of violence are justified in very specifically theological terms. The quote from Anwar al-Awlaki at the beginning of this piece is noteworthy for the way it characterises the Iraq invasion, not through the Left’s language of ‘anti-imperialism’ but as an ‘insult to Islam’. The issue for Salafi-jihadist thinkers is actually not the racism or imperialism of the West – these are, rather, seen as symptoms of a much deeper problem concerned with the ‘godless nature of modernity’ that animates religious fundamentalist thinking

across all faith traditions (Armstrong, 2000; Cowden & Sahgal, 2017). Maher has noted that Salafi-jihadists justify their violence not as opposition to an invading colonial power, but rather because the 'entire notion of the modern nation-state is a heterodox insult to Islam where temporal legislation usurps God's sovereignty' (2017: 11). As the 2003 Al-Qaeda's Manifesto cited earlier noted, the fact that these rulers are 'infidel apostates' makes 'armed and violent rebellion' not just desirable, but 'an individual duty on every Muslim' (in Maher, 2017: 11). Running throughout this entire body of theological argument is an obsessively Manichean discourse about who is and is not a 'true' Muslim, and it is through this that they violently impose their version of Islam as the only pure and authentic one. Like all forms of religious fundamentalism which justify themselves in terms of being a 'return to the past', they are very much products of the present. While the notion of the global Islamic 'ummah' has been around for much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it has received a massive boost through recent technological developments like the internet.<sup>vii</sup> Salafi-jihadist ideological development has also taken place very recently – as Hegghammer notes, this form of thinking only began to be distinguished from other forms of political Islamism in the early 1990s (2009: 246). These movements are anything but 'medieval', as they are often mistakenly characterised by liberal critics (Armstrong, 2000; Cowden & Sahgal, 2017). It is important to understand that, while Salafi-jihadist groups arise out of Islam, the version of Islam they offer is distinct from and deliberately destructive to both mainstream and heterodox historic forms of Muslim religious practice and belief. Nothing demonstrates the almost absurdly violent sectarianism of their project so clearly as Anwar al-Awlaki's statement that 'If a Muslim kills each and every civilian disbeliever on the face of the earth he is still a Muslim and we cannot side with the disbelievers against him' (Bennoune, 2010). It is in the name of such a project that these groups seek to 'purify' Islam, which they achieve through disciplining, repudiating, expelling, and murdering those who believe in a more tolerant, pluralist, and hybrid conception of Islam.

Directly related to the way Arun Kundnani, and much progressive opinion with him, have conceptualised radicalisation through the lens of their own critique of the racism and imperialism of Western governments, is the failure to name the politics of Salafi-jihadism as a politics of the extreme right. Bhatt has noted that while ‘the Western far- and neo-Nazi right may view Salafi-Jihadis and political Islamists as mortal enemies, they are all political tendencies of the far right, whatever their atavistic claims about each other’ (2017: 3). The Algerian sociologist Marième Helie-Lucas has argued similarly that these groups are ‘political movements of the extreme right, which, in a context of globalization, e.g. forceful international economic exploitation and free-for-all capitalism, manipulate religion, culture, or ethnicity, in order to achieve their political aims’ (Helie-Lucas, 2004). Helie-Lucas notes the way these groups often gain influence is by taking over the process of offering social support to working class and poor communities, precisely in the context of neoliberal state withdrawal from social provision. She has described the rise of Islamist politics in the neglected and impoverished suburbs of French cities, noting that:

the big strength of the fundamentalist far-right is that they understood very early that the state abandonment of its duties towards specific categories of citizens, and the decline of the old Communist Parties’ social activities in working-class areas of big cities, created a space for them, whether in [North Africa] or in Europe. ‘Political Islam’ is a popular, and populist, movement. This...has been the fertile ground on which young men, and now young women too, become ‘radicalised’, thanks to the social work done by the Muslim far-right: the youth camps and sports clubs; the after-school tutoring; the sermons; the free distribution of clothing (including, of course, distributing so-called ‘Islamic dress’ in the process); and books (including, of course, fundamentalist literature); the material help brought to homes where the bread winner just died; etc. (Helie-Lucas, 2015)

This points to another central issue, which is the way Salafi-jihadist thinkers are – in common with forms of fundamentalism in all religions –

intensely concerned with controlling women's bodies and sexuality within a divinely sanctioned patriarchal family order. Patricia Madigan's work on both Christian and Islamic fundamentalism argues that while these are generally understood as 'reactive movements against the forces of modernity', few have recognised their 'essentially patriarchal character' and that the process of 'selectively retrieving doctrines, beliefs and practices' from the past is driven by the desire 'to shape a religious identity that will then become the basis of a recreated neo-patriarchal order' (Madigan, 2011: 2). When Al Awlaki states that 'We are very conservative when it comes to family values. We are against the moral decay that we see in the society' (*New York Times*, 2010), it is crucial to note within this framework that it is the sexualised female body that essentially demonstrates the moral decay and godlessness of the West.<sup>viii</sup> Nadjé Al-Ali has argued that Salafi-jihadist doctrine cannot be understood without understanding how central the control of women through violence is, and the way this plays out at many different levels – the home, the public space, and the battlefield where 'the control of women's bodies, their mobility, their sexuality, is a key strategy to demarcate boundaries between us versus them' (Leimbach, 2017). The mass rapes which ISIS carried out towards Yazidi women in 2016 is an example of the way brutal misogyny converges with the Manichean us/them ideology that runs through the Salafi-jihadist project; hence, the horrific levels of violence enacted on non-Salafi women becomes an expression of Salafi-jihadist conceptions of salvation and virtue, but also of state-building<sup>ix</sup>. This points to the real problem with the kind of analysis which Kundnani's work typifies – where the cause of radicalisation is framed as a response to the racism and imperialism of Western governments – which is that it has virtually nothing to say about this defining dimension of the Salafi-jihadist project.

### **Social Work and Prevent**

The UK government's counter-terrorist policy Contest was developed initially in 2003 with significant revisions in 2006, 2011, and 2015 (Home Office 2015a, Home Office 2015b). This strategy is all part of the process by which British counter-terrorist policy was shifted from Northern Ireland-related terrorism, and in the wake of the 9/11 and then the 7/7 bombings, to focus on the forms of terrorism concerned with 'radicalised individuals seen to be using a distorted and unrepresentative version of the Islamic faith to justify violence' (Home Office, 2006: 1). The strategy was organised around four 'principal strands' of activity:

PURSUE: to stop terrorist attacks

PREVENT: to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting violent extremism

PROTECT: to strengthen our protection against terrorist attack

PREPARE: where an attack cannot be stopped, to mitigate its' impact

Prevent was developed as a strand of Contest but has developed as a policy in its own right, concerned with establishing arrangements which seeks to help people 'at risk of becoming involved in terrorism', as well as disrupting the activities of those involved in 'radicalising others'. The Prevent Review and Revised Strategy 2011 (Home Office, 2011b) undertaken by the Cross-Bench Peer Lord Carlile introduced greater levels of multi-agency collaboration and reasserted the earlier aim of seeking to 'stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism' (Home Office, 2011b: 6). Most significantly, this Review elaborated the concept of 'Fundamental British values', with 'extremism' defined within policy as:

Vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. We also include within our



definition of extremism calls for the death of members of our armed forces. (Home Office, 2011b: 7).

This characterisation of ‘fundamental British values’ has been a major focus for criticism of Prevent from progressives, but this characterisation of fundamentalist violence as primarily ‘un-British’ offers a deeply reductionist understanding of Salafi-jihadist ideology, indeed, one that mirrors the reductionism that animates the views of those who are most critical of Prevent.

The ‘multi-agency’ focus of the 2011 shifts in policy also laid the basis of further criticisms concerning the implementation of Prevent which, having begun as a counter-terrorist strategy, began to morph into areas such as community development and youth work, but with the police still in a leading role. This led to widespread criticism of Prevent that it was ‘blurring professional roles and boundaries’ (Thomas, 2010: 449) and that ‘the implication of teachers and youth, community and cultural workers in information-sharing undercuts professional norms of confidentiality’ (Kundnani 2014: 28). The most recent policy revision is *Prevent Duty Guidance of 2015* (Home Office, 2015c) and the significance of this lies in the way it has re-focussed the entire problem of ‘radicalisation’, addressing at least some of these problems. Moving still further away from the securitised focus of earlier policy, radicalisation has now become a ‘safeguarding’ issue, with Local Authorities given a statutory duty to have ‘due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism’ (Home Office, 2015c). The Department for Education now requires Local Safeguarding Children Boards to consider radicalisation within the context of the 2015 *Statutory Guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children* (DfE, 2015), and it is in this way that Social Work has been directly drawn into the orbit of the Prevent and Channel policy (Home Office, 2015d). In relation to the points made above, Prevent and Channel panels do not involve counter-terrorism police being embedded

with social workers, rather, social workers work alongside the police and partner agencies, as they do in safeguarding work already.

These changes represent a significant re-focussing both of safeguarding and of counter-terrorism, and therefore the question of how this has been viewed within Social Work is an important part of this discussion. At a packed Community Care Live event on November 2015, social workers heard Alamgir Sheriyar, active referral coordinator for Kent Police, argue that:

When we talk about radicalisation, child sexual exploitation, and issues with gangs, it is exactly the same process...What we're talking about is vulnerable young people...who are being targeted not because they are bad people or want to get involved in criminal activity, [but] because they are vulnerable and they need a sense of belonging, and through that grooming process they are given that.

At that same event, Social Work academic Jo Finch challenged this point, asking whether Social Work was 'getting into dangerous ideological grounds...Is this our role? Should it be our role? (Community Care, 2015) – points which are elaborated further in her critique of Prevent below. A more recent discussion forum run by *The Guardian* in March 2016 offered unanimous support for the principle of seeing radicalisation as a safeguarding issue analogous to child sexual exploitation (CSE), as these responses demonstrate:

Paul Rigby, lecturer in social work, University of Stirling: 'I would consider all these to be inter-related in so much as they are all likely to constitute child protection concerns, with children presenting with an array of risk and needs. The complexities of exploitation often indicate crossovers between what we may initially consider to be separate issues.' (Hardy, 2016)

Carly Adams, specialist in child sexual exploitation and youth at risk at the Children's Society: 'There are definitely lots of common themes between them – in terms of the level of power and control used, the impact of trauma, the need for a child protection response.' (Hardy, 2016)

Nazir Afzal, the former Chief Prosecutor who secured convictions in the Rochdale grooming trial, has also argued for the recognition of the striking similarities in the way young people are groomed for sex and for acts of terrorism:

In the first stage, the child is manipulated...A young person feels unwanted, unloved, misunderstood and somebody comes along, either some charismatic person or online, and says 'I want you', 'I understand you.' The person thinks somebody is finally listening to them. Generally, these people know what buttons to press. Having manipulated them, the next stage is distancing, where the young person is told not to trust anybody else – don't trust your family, don't trust your friends. The third stage is sexual grooming or with radicalisation, it's taking them away. The process is the same. (Scotsman, 2016)

In 2017, the Department for Education carried out an evaluation of this work, published as the report *Safeguarding and Radicalisation*. This report offers important evidence as to how people involved in undertaking this work are perceiving and experiencing this. The report evaluates ten Local Authorities across the UK, in areas defined as 'high,' 'middle', and 'low prevalence' areas (defined through the number of referrals they receive). While there is mixed evidence about how this is working, one of the most significant findings is that those doing this work perceive that it is working most effectively in areas of high prevalence. These are most likely to be urban inner-city areas with significant Muslim populations. Social workers working in this area clearly support the contention that radicalisation falls within the remit of safeguarding. This report noted that there was in some

of the Local Authorities ‘no internal consensus within an authority on how the threat of radicalisation should be responded to’ (2017: 5) and this resulted in confusion for staff and families referred to the Prevent and Channel programmes. This was much more of a problem in ‘low prevalence’ areas. By contrast, ‘where staff are confident in how they should handle radicalisation cases, they were also better able to engage effectively with families and children who are at risk’ (2017: 6). This is significant for the way it shows that Social Workers doing this work clearly feel they are – when they have the support of their managers and agencies – effectively safeguarding young people from harm in this work.

While there was initially considerable suspicion about Prevent amongst individuals and families referred to the programme in areas with high Muslim populations, the report evidences that this was usually able to be overcome with explanations which addressed people’s fears about the intention of the programme. The report cites one incident of a father whose son was referred to the programme being initially overtly hostile to the programme, but as he came to see how it worked, completely reversed his view and went on to volunteer locally for it (2017: 25-26). Another significant conclusion is that those most overtly hostile to it are precisely those about whom one would have an entirely justified concern about their involvement with Salafi-jihadist networks.

Concern was expressed by social workers about the treatment of those families whose children were not found to have legitimate concerns, with it being felt that these people were being left without appropriate support or adequate explanation. A related concern for practitioners were ‘overzealous’ referrals (2017: 6) often from Schools and Health Authorities.

The conclusions from the Report focussed on measures concerned with clarifying responsibilities, streamlining referrals, and building and sharing an evidence base to learn from previous practice, as well as ‘engaging with communities to build awareness and understanding’ (2017: 6-7). While the 2017 DfE Report evidences genuine concerns around implementation, this work is part of an emerging evidence base concerning the appropriateness of social work’s involvement in work around radicalisation as part of the safeguarding process.

One of the most important implications for Social Work that comes from this evaluation is that where social workers feel well supported by their agencies, they can work effectively with presenting concerns in a safeguarding role. By the same token, this becomes very difficult when practitioners are working in agencies which had not developed an understanding of these issues. What we would see as crucial is that the safeguarding role is combined with a contextualised political understanding of Salafi-jihadism as a political movement and an ideology. This is even more acutely important when working with families with important connections to the Middle East and North Africa, where these groups are most active.

We would argue that it was just this political understanding that was lacking in the Serious Case Review (SCR) undertaken into the deaths of ‘W’ and ‘X’, two teenage brothers from the Brighton and Hove area who travelled to Syria in 2014 where they joined the Al-Nusra Front, an al-Qaeda affiliate (Brighton & Hove LSCB, 2017). Tragically, both siblings were killed while in Syria. The SCR was set up to investigate the fact that, despite extensive involvement with Children’s Services over several years, practitioners failed to anticipate the possibility of the children being recruited into Salafi-jihadist networks. The background to this case is

complex. The family, which comprised the parents and five siblings, had fled to the UK from Libya in the late 1980s to early 1990s where they had previously been part of that country's educated social elite. The family left Libya as a consequence of persecution by the Libyan regime which developed from the regime's perception that some members of the families were Islamists (2017: 13). In a related development, an uncle of the family had been imprisoned in Guantánamo Bay, though he was subsequently released without charge. However, once the latter information became public knowledge, the family were directly targeted by neo-Nazis in Brighton, which included demonstrations outside their house and graffiti in the area in which they lived, stating 'Behead All Muslims' (2017: 12). The contact between Children's Services and the family came about through evidence of the children's early trauma associated with their exposure to domestic violence against their mother from their father, and services appeared to have struggled to provide an appropriate response to this. In 2010, 'W' and a younger brother 'Q' disclosed at a youth club that they had experienced physical abuse from their father in relation to their lack of observance of their religion. All five brothers were placed on child protection plans and their mother moved to alternative accommodation, but the Crown Prosecution Service took no further action against the father following retraction of the statements by the siblings.

A key issue that comes up throughout the SCR was the way services failed to engage with the *political significance* of Salafi-jihadism within the family, particularly given the information that was before them, and this contributed directly to the two young brothers' later disappearance to Syria. For example, services were aware that an older brother of 'W' and 'X' had travelled to Syria, but had accepted entirely at face value the claim that this role was purely related to 'supporting aid work'. Finding 6 of the SCR notes the need to:

provide children and young people with information and evidence to counter the propaganda that they may be accessing on the internet and the impact of peer pressure via social networking: to be effective this will need to address the appeal of belonging to particular groups, who provide a strong identity, promise the resolution of the world's problems and social injustices (2017: 45)

While this is undoubtedly correct, the problem seems to us lie more in the way services working with the family struggled to conceptualise the issues that were presenting in the family in a holistic way. This involves grasping the way the family were both victims of racist persecution as well being part of violent Salafi-jihadist networks, not to mention all the other family issues that services were dealing with. The key to this in our view is having a political understanding of what Salafi-jihadism represents, both in understanding the extent to which it diverges from mainstream forms of Islam, as well as considering the possibility of connections between this ideology and the violence toward female family members and toward the children for 'lack of religious observance'. This political understanding can be crucial in allowing practitioners to make the connections between Salafi-jihadism as a world-view and the statements and actions of family members. For example, when sibling 'X' was arrested in 2012 for anti-social behaviour, he shouted at the police that 'they would die as they did not follow Allah, that they would burn in hell on judgement day and that the day was coming very soon' (2017: 50) – a statement which clearly reflects Salafi-jihadist themes, but which fail to occasion any specific recognition as such. Another sibling, 'Q', returned from a trip to Libya making strong outbursts against 'Americans' (2017: 51) which were perceived as understandable in the context of the fighting which was taking place in Libya at this time, but were not explored any further by practitioners. It is always important for practitioners to understand and be curious about the communities in the areas they work, including issues of culture, identity, and religion. But rather than reaching too readily for the

culturally relativist argument, we would argue that practitioners need to be aware of what the people we are working with are telling us about how they see the world, and to be aware of the implications this may have. Ideologies and identities are never innocent – they are always situated in a social and political context, and as practitioners, we need to know about this. In relation to our earlier arguments about the (often violent) control exerted towards women within Salafi-jihadism, we would add that this is another crucial indicator where practitioners could have put different pieces of the situation facing this family together. In terms of future learning, we would argue it also raises the importance of agencies developing resources and strategies to engage women who are at risk, but who might resist becoming involved with services for fear of wider family/community rejection.

### **Prevent as Surveillance**

We now want to turn to those arguments mounted by a range of Social Work academics who have expressed concerns that Prevent represents a form of ideological policing, stifling children and young people's entirely legitimate interest in political causes and in being critical of the government. It should be noted at the outset that there is nothing new about the argument that social workers are involved in 'policing' families, the working class, minority communities, and/or women, and these arguments have been made of Social Work for several decades (see for example Donzelot, 1997; Jones, 1983; and Smart, 1992). The analysis offered by Finch and McKendrick in their 2017 *British Journal of Social Work* piece "Under Heavy Manners" could be seen as drawing on this work. With regard to Prevent, their key argument is that, in a context where state policy is seeking to institutionalise new forms of social inequality, the social work role is becoming 'securitised' (2017: 315). Prevent, they argue, targets families who are economically deprived and 'discriminated against due to racism and Islamophobia' (2017: 313):



The suggestion that social workers should infiltrate families in this way is a deliberate ideological attempt to remake social work and to diminish trust-based relationships. In this new incarnation, social work is fundamentally judgemental and exists as an agent of social control in terms of targeting service users with values, cultural practices or ideological beliefs that do not accord with Western neo-liberal ones (2017: 318).

The claim that Muslim families experience Prevent as 'infiltration' is offered without specific evidence, and this is a feature of many critics of the policy. We would argue that, while there is undoubtedly mistrust between Muslim communities and state agencies like social work in the present context, it is important of the extent to which there are divergent views towards Prevent within Muslim communities. Alongside those sceptical of the intent of this policy are those who have serious concern that it is their children who are most heavily targeted by Salafi-jihadists, and who are seeking support from state agencies like social workers to deal with this. The DfE report cited above (2017) also demonstrates that social workers involved in safeguarding work in this context have been able to build trust-based relationships with Muslim families, and this points to the way practitioners and families are able to work around the specific threat to children and young people posed by Salafi-jihadist radicalisation. It is for this reason that we would question Finch and McKendrick's claim that Prevent is essentially concerned with the policing of cultural practices not in accordance with 'Western neo-liberal beliefs', but we would also point out that the authors' objection to these beliefs is of an entirely different order to the objections of Salafi-jihadists. In other words, like many critics of Prevent, Finch and McKendrick fail to critically interrogate what Salafi-jihadists and their sympathisers *actually stand for*. Indeed, groups such as CAGE, which have showed consistent support for Salafi-jihadist ideologue Anwar al-Awlaki (Bhatt 2017: 13), have

popularised just these sorts of arguments by presenting measures which are taken against violent fundamentalists as attacks on 'all Muslims'<sup>x</sup>.

Tony Stanley and Surinder Guru offer a still stronger critique of involvement with Prevent, arguing that through this, 'social workers might find themselves pawns in an ideologically driven moral panic' (2015: 354). The central issue they challenge with the shift toward safeguarding is that it denies 'the political nature of terrorism', offering instead 'pathologising discourses' which position social workers as 'akin to 'thought police' (2015: 357):

By emphasising the 'vulnerability' of individuals, these processes of risk assessment and prevention give primacy to a 'deficit thinking' risk model that the population in question is deficient and in need of improvement/treatment. This emphasis on normative systems and networks gives primacy to positivist, psychologising discourses which deny individuals agency and the political nature of their experiences and social problems. The focus on individuals and families isolates them from being seen in their holistic socio-economic, political context and their resistance to oppression and injustice is seen as an aberration, a problem, a state of mind which can be changed, treated and normalised by the introduction of alternative activities, relationships and networks. For this reason, amongst many Muslim communities, Prevent and Channel are primarily seen as tools for surveillance of Muslim children, justified by particular ideological constructions about the processes causing radicalisation (2015: 358-9).

As with both Kundnani and Finch and McKendrick, Stanley and Guru present a picture of widespread opposition to Prevent from 'many Muslim communities' which we would argue falsely homogenises the range of views around Prevent amongst Muslims. More problematic still is their claim that the adoption of Salafi-jihadist views represents 'resistance to

oppression'. While they are right to point to the way an entirely pathological discourse about radicalisation denies the extent to which it is 'political' – and one of the key arguments we have made here is that it is most definitely political – Stanley and Guru ignore the fact that even an elementary consideration of the content of this shows it to be politics replete with the most hateful sectarianism, anti-Semitism, misogyny, and homophobia. One wonders if Stanley and Guru would argue that young men who join white nationalist groups like the English Defence League are equally demonstrating 'resistance to oppression' in attributing their poverty and joblessness to Muslims and immigrants? This article concludes with the statement that:

The call to arms across the Muslim countries resonates with Muslims across the globe, a process facilitated by the concept of 'Ummah' or unity amongst Muslims which has intensified after 9/11. This can be seen as a product of political awareness, borne out of the exploitation and oppression by the West and the alienation it has generated (2015: 361).

There is something deeply problematic about the way this statement lends legitimacy to the language and approach of Salafi-jihadist groups – what we are talking about here are groups whose politics were manifested through the Charlie Hebdo murders in Paris, the mass rapes of Yazidi women carried out by ISIS, and the indoctrination of 10-year-olds into acting as suicide bombers in Syria and Afghanistan (Bloom 2017, Bloom and Horgan, 2015). Stanley and Guru's characterisation of Salafi-jihadist groups as analogous to anti-imperial freedom fighters sits utterly incongruously with the evidence of how these groups have horrifically violated the human rights of women, children, and civilian populations in general with barbaric cruelty. The way these authors can overlook the latter and, at the same time, call for a 'rights based approach' in Social Work practice (2015: 362) really bespeaks the extent of confusion amongst progressive opinion with regard to what Salafi-jihadists actually represent.

While it is crucial for Social Workers to understand the pathways that can lead to such fundamentalist violence – and one would say the exact same thing about white neo-fascists – what is completely missing from this account is any sense of the need to challenge these, both at the level of Social Work values, as well as the need to safeguard children and young people from associated harm. Reading this material, one is left asking how it is that critical and intelligent Social Work academics and practitioners such as they are prepared to grant credibility to political ideologies that are utterly opposed to the values of human rights and equality to which they are clearly committed.

### **Conclusion – Some Future Policy Directions**

Throughout this piece, we have argued that it is crucial that those who take questions of human rights seriously engage with the substantive agenda of Salafi-jihadists. This involves understanding the way this represents a significant development within non-violent conservative and puritanical versions of Islam into the violently Manichean political movements we now see wreaking havoc across the world. In such a context, it is crucial for left and progressive thinking to move beyond confusing their own opposition to the ‘war on terror’ based on the violation of human rights with the reactionary and brutal violence of the Salafi-jihadists. The need to better understand this political agenda is crucial both for Social Work education and practice. One of the issues which stands out for us from the Brighton and Hove SCR is that, in order to protect children and young people from the harms which stem from radicalisation, practitioners need to have a much better informed sense of the attitudes and character which those who are grooming these young people are seeking to nurture. Being curious about this can make a crucial difference to the safeguarding role, and we need to be completely clear that this is not the same as acting as ‘thought police’. Social work’s concern is not in any way preventing critical thinking – indeed, it is more important

than ever that we encourage this. But we are concerned with preventing young people being drawn into Salafi-jihadist networks where they may be killed or raped, be required to carry out murders and rapes, and if they are caught, spend their lives in prison as Roshonara Choudhry is currently doing. It is in the light of this understanding that we would mount a critical defence of the safeguarding focus within Prevent and Channel, and we would additionally argue that this is entirely congruent with the Social Work focus on harm from the abuse and exploitation these clearly represent to children and young people. We would argue, however, that taking this position does not mean that there are not problems with the Prevent policy as it is currently constituted. As far back as 2009, Yahya Birt noted that the central problem with the policy has been its 'overemphasis upon counter-terrorism without engaging Muslims as citizens rather than an "at risk" set communities' (Birt, 2009: 54). This is crucial not just from a civil liberties perspective, but also because it acknowledges the extent of opposition to Salafi-jihadism amongst Muslims. It is in this sense that we would argue for the removal of Lord Carlile's definition of extremism as opposition to 'fundamental British values'. While democracy, the rule of law, and tolerance are undoubtedly important, it is not clear how these are specifically 'British'; they could be considered as universal democratic norms. Equally problematically, the focus on 'British values' constructs Salafi-jihadist violence as a problem of Muslims who are insufficiently integrated or loyal to the British nation. As we have argued, Salafi-jihadism is a transnational politics akin to white supremacist neo-fascism, and it is both myopic as well as simply incorrect to characterise its violence as 'un-British', not least because the vast majority of its victims are Muslim, and additionally because so much of its violence is specifically directed against women. We also argue that neo-liberal austerity and welfare retrenchment policies as they have been implemented for the last decade continue to create the conditions for radicalisation, both in producing those forms of individual despair and isolation which make Manichean solutions attractive, as well as reducing the capacity for social workers,

youth workers, and third sector agencies to provide more hopeful and creative alternatives for our young people. The Prevent policy we would like to see developed is one which would base itself on explicit political arguments for a reconstructed democratic and rights-based social welfarist politics. While the extent to which Salafi-jihadism represents a very specific violation of women's rights has been something we have only touched on in this article, we also believe that the future development of preventative strategies must involve support for those women and men who are working toward gender-based equality, which must itself be seen as a central component of a more just and equal future for society as a whole.

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<sup>ii</sup> The group CAGE, formerly 'Cageprisoners' were founded in 2003. The group's outreach director is Moazzam Begg, a former Guantánamo Bay detainee who was released without charge in 2005. The group describe themselves on their website as 'an independent grassroots organisation striving for a world free of injustice and oppression. We campaign against discriminatory state policies and advocate for due process and the rule of law' (<https://www.cage.ngo/about-us>). This is a description accepted at face value by many, while others would argue that these claims are rendered at the very least problematic by the way they have persistently sought to lend legitimacy to the work of violent salafi-jihadist spokespeople. For example the Al Qaeda leader Anwar Al-Awlaki, who inspired the Newham student Roshonara Choudhury discussed in this article, was live streamed into their conference from Yemen at the Wandsworth Civic Centre in London in 2008, a time at which there was evidence of his involvement in murders, kidnappings as well being wanted for possible involvement in the 9/11 bombings. (<https://web.archive.org/web/20100105040107/http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/terrorism-in-the-uk/6924653/Detroit-bombers-mentor-continues-to-influence-British-mosques-and-universities.html>)

<sup>iii</sup> Hegghammer characterises the most politically substantial characteristics of salafi-jihadists as being that they are 'more extremist and intransigent than other [Salafist] groups', and that while all Salafists draw on the Salafi or Wahhabi religious tradition, salafi-jihadists 'are more internationalist and anti-Western than other groups.' (2009, pp.253-254)

<sup>iv</sup> Shiraz Maher, who is Deputy Director of the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation at John Hopkins University in the US, is the sort of individual Kundnani is criticising. However, Maher's work on salafi-jihadism (Maher, 2018) does offer insightful analysis of the politics of salafi-jihadism which should not be dismissed out of hand. Indeed, as Maher has made clear, his interest in these groups stems from his own involvement with Islamist groups. As a young man, Maher was a member of the Islamist group Hizb ut-Tahrir but after the 2005 London bombings he left the organisation and became dedicated to opposing violent political Islamism, a journey he described on a BBC Panorama programme in 2007 (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/panorama/7016299.stm>). While the rejection of Islamist movements by former members does allow the nature of these groups to be exposed, what seems most problematic to us is the way Maher has travelled from Islamist to uncritical supporter of the US and Israel (see Cronin, 2013). One might speculate as to whether this reveals something of the 'all-or-nothing' mentality which draws individuals toward fundamentalist explanations in the first place.

<sup>v</sup> Rahimi and Graumans make the point that much of the radicalisation literature understands this process in a highly decontextualised way: 'Radicalisation...always needs to be contextualised, understood, measured in relation to the cultural, social and political context in which it is studied' (2015, p.47). This point is not dissimilar to Kundnani's critique but this point is made without the dismissal of this entire body of work.

<sup>vi</sup> Within Roshonara Choudhury's transcript of interview after the attempted murder of Stephen Timms she described an earlier visit to the UK Parliament in which a classmate



did explicitly criticise MPs over the Iraq War. Rather than being supportive of these actions, Choudhury describes her reaction as one of embarrassment, wishing the classmate would stop (McDonald, 2013:158). This points to the way - contra Kundnani – that rather than expressing social concerns about ‘racism, poverty and Empire’, radicalisation is as Khosrokhavar argues, highly narcissistic in that it is the ‘martyr’ themselves, rather than social struggles, that occupy centre stage (cited in McDonald, 2013:183).

<sup>vii</sup> Rahimi and Graumans argue that ‘In Muslim contexts, online communities take on special significance as they relate to the central Islamic notion of ‘ummah’, which denotes an abstract, transnational “community” of all Muslims around the globe...With new developments in technologies of information and communication ‘ummah’ has assumed brand new significance (e.g. Roy, 2010, 2014). In Spalek and Imtoul’s (2007) words, ‘[Islamic] militants now join an “imagined community” that works through minds attitudes and discourses rather than geographic locales or through social and family ties” (p.194). This increasingly important “community’ born of an exceptional convergence between traditional ideology and postmodern technology, however, has rarely been the topic of research’ (2015, p.43)

<sup>viii</sup> In relation to this it is revealing to note the results of FBI surveillance of the US born Al-Awlaki during the years when they were closely monitoring his movements, which revealed that he frequently visited prostitutes and that the FBI were seriously considering a criminal prosecution of him on this basis (New York Times, 27/8/2015).

<sup>ix</sup> The Centre of Feminist Foreign Policy has reinforced this with regard to the politics of ISIS specifically: ‘Daesh differs from its jihadist predecessors in its intent to establish a caliphate. As such, Daesh has made the recruitment of women a priority, essential to its long-term state-building goals. After all, states not only need men to fight and establish a caliphate but also need women to sustain it and raise the next generation. Thus, women are needed as wives and mothers who will form the foundation of a stable society. These women are not simply short-term homemakers; they are long-term state builders. Fertility, then, is of prime importance to the group, and to this end, the protection of women is paramount. The fertility of a population is dependent on its number of women, not men. Thus, men are more expendable than women. Excluding women from participating in direct combat roles ensures their physical security, furthering the long-term capacity of the caliphate. In the aim of establishing a state, Daesh must distinguish between in-group women, who are needed to preserve the state, and out-group women, who symbolize the same long-term capability of the enemy. Scholars have theorized that the widespread use of rape in times of conflict is a tactic used to traumatize and destabilize one’s enemy at the community and familial level. Targeting enemy women and sanctioning systematic rape and enslavement not only devastates enemy populations, but also serves to attract and maintain male Daesh fighters with promises of “spoils of war.” <https://centreforfeministforeignpolicy.org/journal/2017/1/17/women-as-victims-and-perpetrators-of-daesh-violence>

<sup>x</sup> A recent example which CAGE have placed on the internet refers to social work very specifically. In this video, we see a woman ‘Sister Maryam’ who alleges that in 2016 ‘Prevent’ brought about the removal of her children – and alleges that there was no reason for the removal of these children other than that fact that ‘we are Muslims’ (<https://www.facebook.com/CageUK/videos/1691457434201090/>). Not only is it illegal for the police or social workers to remove children purely on the basis that the families are Muslims, but neither is Prevent part of the legal framework which relates to the removal of children. It may be that there was a specific safeguarding concern here, but one will not discover that from watching this video. This form of deliberately misleading material continues to be highly influential on the internet and is often shared and supported by people on the Left.