

Commission orders the winding-up of charity funding TV programmes which encouraged hate speech and violence

The Charity Commission has found misconduct and/or mismanagement by the trustees of Islamic Research Foundation International (IRFI). This includes their decision to continue to fund Peace TV channels despite several breaches of Ofcom's Broadcasting Code.

IRFI was registered in 2007, with the aim of advancing the faith and religious practices of Islam. Its principal focus and expenditure had been to support Peace TV channels.

The Commission opened an inquiry into IRFI in April 2020, after engagement with the trustees about the charity's governance and their report of a serious incident regarding the media regulator Ofcom's investigation into Peace TV channels.

Ofcom's investigation found that since 2009, Peace TV channels repeatedly broadcast programmes that breached the Ofcom Broadcasting Code. This included programmes that incited violence and murder, and programmes containing hate speech and abusive treatment.

The inquiry found that the trustees mismanaged the charity and did not act in its best interests. This included their decision to continue funding for Peace TV.

The inquiry also concluded that the trustees repeatedly failed to consider changes or alternatives for applying charitable funds and did not learn any lessons, following Ofcom's adverse findings.

Between 2015 and 2020, 96% of the charity's expenditure, amounting to around £3.6million, was granted to Universal Broadcasting Company, the parent company of the Peace TV channels' two licence holders. Some of the charity's trustees had been directors of companies within this group structure whilst also acting as trustees of the charity. The inquiry saw no evidence that conflicts of interest were appropriately identified and managed.

Prior to the inquiry opening, the Commission disqualified by Order the charity's founder and one of its trustees, Dr Zakir Naik, from acting as a trustee and from holding senior management functions in any charity in England and Wales. This was appealed to the Charity Tribunal which ruled in its decision of 4 December 2020 that he should be disqualified for 7.5 years.

In July 2020, the Commission appointed an interim manager to take over the management and administration of the charity to the exclusion of its trustees and to make a determination as to the charity's viability. The interim manager concluded that the charity was no longer viable. The Commission

issued an order to direct the interim manager to wind-up the charity, which was removed from the register on 11 May 2022. The charity's remaining funds of £57,950 have been transferred to three charities with similar objects.

Tim Hopkins, Assistant Director, Investigations and Inquiries at the Charity Commission, said:

This charity was mismanaged by its trustees, including through their failure to manage the charity's relationship with Peace TV channels following Ofcom's findings. These and other repeated governance failures rendered the charity unviable, and the Commission's intervention has secured its dissolution.

As part of our intervention into this charity we determined that Dr Naik's conduct makes him unfit to act as a trustee or hold senior management positions in any charity in England and Wales. Our order protects charities by prohibiting him from acting.

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

1. The Charity Commission is the independent, non-ministerial government department that registers and regulates charities in England and Wales. Its purpose is to ensure charity can thrive and inspire trust so that people can improve lives and strengthen society.
2. The inquiry report can be seen [here](#).
3. The Charity Tribunal's judgment on Dr Naik's disqualification can be seen [here](#).