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30 October 2009

**The Rt Hon John Denham MP**  
*Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government*

**Department for Communities and Local Government**

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*Dear Mr. Husain,*

Many thanks for your letter of 16<sup>th</sup> October. I enjoyed speaking at the event you co-hosted at the Labour Party conference and felt that it was a good opportunity to have a wide-ranging discussion on important issues.

In your letter, you raised concerns about the allocation on Prevent funding to certain groups. To clarify, apart from MINAB and the Islamic Society of Britain, this department has not funded the groups that you cited through Prevent funding streams. These groups were funded through the Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund in 2006/07 which was a previous funding stream with different objectives and criteria. This funding stream is no longer extant.

We now make clear that groups funded through the Preventing Violent Extremism Community Leadership Fund should uphold shared values like respect for the rule of law; freedom of speech; equality of opportunity; respect for others and responsibility towards others. They should also reject and condemn violent extremism and terrorist acts, clearly and consistently.

However, we recognise that we need to bring people together who have different points of view in order to build a cohesive society.

You also raise concerns about the makeup of the Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board (MINAB). It may help if I set out some relevant background first.

I believe that a community-led, self regulatory approach to increase standards in all mosques will be effective in the long term. It is essential for Muslim communities in the UK to have such institutions as centres of excellence bearing the highest standards. This is why we have supported MINAB as an independent community-led organisation, which aims to engage fully with all mosques.

You may know that around 600 mosques and other Muslim organisations (e.g. training institutes) have registered with MINAB. It is important that initiatives like MINAB support and empower mosques and other Muslim faith organisations so that they are able to lead a community response to effectively counter radicalisation, and promote active and responsible citizenship.

The MINAB General Council met on 10 May 2009 to elect its Executive Board. In addition to the 16 directly appointed members of the Board (comprising the four founding organisations) thirty four representatives were elected from the Sunni and Shia communities. As with all community led organisations, it is for MINAB to decide how it is governed, and who is involved in its governance. I think that you will agree that this is an impressive response by Muslim communities.

The Government does not engage directly with the Muslim Association of Britain, it does sometimes engage with individuals indirectly through MINAB. Within this proportionate framework we limit our engagement to specific mosque related issues.

You raised the issue of "Muslim only" and "Jewish only" meetings and suggested holding a joint meeting between the two faiths to discuss cohesion issues. As I am sure you will recognise, different formats for meetings will be appropriate depending on the issues being discussed. Over time, a combination of meetings with individual faiths, with two or more faith communities, or with the full Faith Communities Consultative Council which brings together representatives from all nine historic faiths will be the most effective means of achieving the dialogue you seek. I recognise that it is essential that messages are communicated consistently to all faith communities.

Thank you for enclosing your submission to the CLG Select Committee on Prevent. I am looking forward to the Oral Evidence sessions of the inquiry and hearing the committee's views on the progress we are making on Prevent.

Yours sincerely,  
John Denham

JOHN DENHAM

Prime Secretary

**APPROVED BY THE  
MINISTER AND SIGNED  
IN HIS ABSENCE**