

Open Temple<sup>1</sup> – An attempt by Taj Hargey<sup>2</sup> to attack traditional Islam  
in the guise of liberalism and pluralism.

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Abstract:

This paper is an academic attempt to shed light on recent events initiated and publicised by Taj Hargey and his Open Mosque. I will explore what the said Open Mosque is about and who its founder Taj Hargey is. The recent publicly held radio interviews and internet material has sparked debate in the public and this paper will explore why. Lastly the public has been calling for a response by the scholars to these events and a solution to address their concerns and this will also be attempted.

## Introduction

Several public advertisements have recently surfaced, informing the public of an 'open mosque'. The concept, according to the mosque's director, Taj Hargey, is his own brain-child which he long dreamed of and now realised with the help of a few others (he did not specify).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In the title I have chosen the words Open Temple to describe Hargey's Open Mosque as this is what some traditional scholars in Cape Town have called it. Throughout the article, however, in keeping with academic standards, I have generally referred to it as Open Mosque.

<sup>2</sup> Taj Hargey is a Cape Town born academic, residing in Oxford (Not a professor at the Oxford University). For some unknown reason, mainstream media in Cape Town have been calling him a professor at Oxford University or, misleadingly, an Oxford academic. Other than his British residence, he has said that he would be spending half of the year in Cape Town and the other half in Britain.

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<sup>4</sup> 567 Cape Talk, Tuesday 16 September 2014 at around 11:00. Based on the findings explored in this article, it seems strange that mainstream media has given Hargey so much air-time. The overwhelming highlights of the interviews, by the presenters and Hargey, were the progressive, egalitarian and pluralist nature of Hargey's endeavour verses the backward, conservative and patriarchal nature of traditional Muslims and their mosques.

Hargey's mosque is scheduled to open on Friday 19 September at the address 4 Lester Road, Wynberg. Over the past three days (since 16 September 2014), Hargey has been on Radio 567 Cape Talk and Talk Radio 702 to discuss the concept of the Open Mosque. These discussions, however, contained more than just a description of Hargey's mosque. The interviewer initially inquired about the "open-nature" of Hargey's mosque and the mixed gender prayers, but Hargey diverted the discussion, as he did in subsequent interviews, to a blatant attack on traditional Islamic beliefs, practices and especially the clergy.<sup>5</sup>

Earlier today, on Radio 567 Cape Talk, the Redi Tlhabi show hosted Hargey and the following summary has been posted on the 567 web site:

Hargey refers to a mosque that would be accepting of homosexuals, non-Muslims<sup>6</sup> and also see women taking a lead in prayers. Hargey argues a lot of what is accepted practice in the religion is in fact an 'Arabisation' of Islam, pointing to segregated prayer facilities - which he says are not Islamic practice - the wearing of long robes and beards by men and various other practices.

Hargey made some claims and accusations during these interviews which upset the traditional Sunni Muslim public as well as their scholars and religious leaders. Hargey referred to the mainstream Sunni practice of Islam as a medieval interpretation. He claimed that the *Sharī'ah* is a concoction of the clergy (the *Ulamā*) and not part of Islam. He described this type of Islam as patriarchal, Neanderthal, chauvinistic, primitive and that it has no place in 21<sup>st</sup> century society. He denied the Ḥadīth legacy outright as "fairy tales". He described the practice of the Muslims who wear beards and *thawbs* as "crazy-bearded" and "pyjama-wearing" fanatics. Furthermore his assault on

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.capetalk.co.za/articles/96>

<sup>6</sup> In a similar radio interview on Channel Islam International (CII), he contradicts this point about being open to non-Muslims. This disparity may be explained in light of Cape Talk having a predominantly non-Muslim audience and CII having a predominantly Muslim audience, in other words Hargey seems to play to the emotions of his audience.

the *‘Ulamā*, especially the MJC<sup>7</sup>, could be described as blatant *ad-hominem* name-calling. According to Hargey, the clergy are a bunch of matric or high school drop-outs, who were then sent to theological seminaries as donkeys and thus emerged as donkeys. He claims that at a matric level, none of the intelligent students become Mullas or Sheikhs, rather they become doctors, lawyers and academics etcetera. Hargey claims that he and his un-named Open Mosque clergy, however, are the erudite, enlightened and egalitarian true scholars of Islam.

The Islam which Hargey claims to be proselytising is Qur’ān-centric, pluralistic, progressive and egalitarian which is “open to all”. He clearly denies ḥadīth *en masse* as man-made concoctions and the same goes for the *Shari’ah*. Strangely, the non-Muslim, Radio 702 interviewer, observed and put it to Hargey twice that “it seems by your deliberate insults of the way Muslims dress and practice Islam, that you are trying to provoke reactions” (paraphrased). To this Hargey responded that he only wants to expose the clergy to the people as they have been misleading the Muslims into believing in an Islam that is not based on the Qur’ān.

Hargey said that he is proud to be part of South Africa’s first Open Mosque and that he is overwhelmed by the responses (positive according to Hargey) which he has received from the public. On air, as the 567 website states, “the charismatic theologian answered questions sent his way from committed Muslims, curious non-Muslim and everyone in between”. These questions revealed that among the general public there are three types of responses to Hargey’s endeavour.

### **The Peoples Response**

Firstly there are the protagonists among the Muslims and non-Muslims. It was clear from their contributions that they were especially enthralled by the idea of a progressive, pluralistic and

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<sup>7</sup> This clear vendetta against the Muslim Judicial Council appears to be a reflection of Hargey’s past tensions with the organisation. (Refer to the newspaper articles replicated in this paper).

egalitarian or gender-just Islam, but they made little mention of the 'Qur'ān-only' notion, the rejection of the Sharī'ah or the Ḥadīth. These people (mostly women) did not formulate their decisions based on Hargey's new endeavour, but they have found refreshing expression therein and they were clearly the minority. From their questions and statements it seemed as though they were driven by two motives. 1. They were unhappy with the treatment they received by the clergy. 2. They were seeking to find justification for their modern lifestyles within their religion.

Secondly there were the antagonists among the Muslims (mainly) and some non-Muslims. They found Hargey's idea of Islam and his Open Mosque appalling and insulting. Whilst most of their objections were valid and expected, unfortunately many of them expressed these objections with emotive and prejudiced attacks which fuelled Hargey's plight and accusations further.

Thirdly there were some 'indifferent' callers, mostly non-Muslims, and some Muslims who viewed Hargey's endeavour as admirable, but questioned his method. Some Muslims claimed that his venture is not as pioneering as he claims. By this they referred to the long-standing Claremont Main Road Mosque which also claims to promote a pluralistic and egalitarian interpretation of Islam. In this Mosque men and women share the same prayer space and are only separated by a chain.

Towards the end of one of his Cape Talk interviews, Hargey, sarcastically, thanked the MJC (or the clergy as he calls them) for giving the Open Mosque the publicity which it could never have afforded.

### **The Official Mission Statement**

The official website of Hargey's Open Mosque <sup>8</sup> makes a number of points about the organisation's own views and the objections it has against traditional Islam in South Africa. The following is a verbatim

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<sup>8</sup> <http://theopenmosque.co.za/>

reproduction of the Mission and Vision web page of the site.<sup>9</sup> I will attempt to analyse some of the statements herein in the footnotes, in an attempt to bring to light the reason for which Muslims in South Africa have become disturbed by these events.

## **The Open Mosque: For all Progressive, Open-minded & Forward-looking Muslims.<sup>10</sup>**

### 1. GENERAL BACKGROUND OF ISLAM IN SOUTH AFRICA

Islam in South Africa, including the Western Cape, is based mainly upon mindless rituals, superstitious legends, cultural mythology and a blatant sexist contamination of the pristine faith.<sup>11</sup> These and other perverse falsehoods do not stem from Islam's supreme text but from suspect subsidiary sources.<sup>12</sup> With little or no recourse to the transcendent text itself, many Muslims subscribe to a concocted creed that is unrelated to the Holy Qur'an. Now, these warped, virulent misconceptions have gained greater ascendancy with the rising proliferation of crude Wahhabi/Salafi/Shi'ah/Tablighi and other sectarian distortions of the sacred scripture. This toxic theological propaganda deforms original Islam and is the prime reason for growing Muslim alienation to and disaffection with contemporary religion. It is this blind belief and robotic ritualism –

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<sup>9</sup> <http://theopenmosque.co.za/mission-vision/>

<sup>10</sup> The title and what appears to be a mission statement, contains some contradictions. The organisation is called "open", but is then further qualified with a restriction, "for all progressive, open-minded and forward-looking Muslims". This statement thus excludes non-Muslims (contrary to what Hargey claimed on Radio 567 Cape Talk), traditional/conservative Muslims (as this is usually juxtaposed to progressive Muslims), and any Muslims which Hargey and his associates deem to be backward-looking Muslims.

<sup>11</sup> Since there is no reference provided for these claims, it is assumed that this statement and all subsidiary claims are the personal emotively expressed views of Hargey and his associates and not conclusions based on academic research, nor the views of the majority of Muslims founded by an academically orientated social study.

<sup>12</sup> These "suspect subsidiary sources" refer to the Ḥadīth literature. This was made clear by Hargey's radio interviews over the last three days (16 September 2014). The "perverse falsehoods" are thus, according to him, what is derived from the ḥadīth of the Prophet *sallā Llāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*. The overwhelming majority of traditional *Sunni* Muslims have held that Ḥadīth, next to the Qur'an is Islam's primary source of divine instruction. Western academics, such as the contemporary American Ḥadīth scholar, Jonathan A.C. Brown, have also attested to this fact (Brown, Jonathan A. C., *Ḥadīth - Muhammad's Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World*, (2009) Oneworld Publications, Oxford).

rather than reason and logic as required by God's Book – that are the hallmarks of Islam in South Africa.<sup>13</sup>

## 2. THE DEPLORABLE PRESENT SITUATION

Most mosques in the Cape Peninsula are either MJC-aligned or influenced. This self-appointed, un-accountable and non-transparent body of often poorly trained clergy dictates and controls the lives of the Muslim masses.<sup>14</sup> In this noxious environment, there is no recognized haven for progressive or thinking Muslims fed-up with a 'fairy-tale' faith or non-Qur'anic dogmas to have any enriching solidarity with each other.<sup>15</sup> Sadly, this influential segment of Muslim society has no spiritual home where they can congregate freely to enhance their Qur'an-derived spirituality, leading inevitably to either their estrangement or withdrawal from Islam and the community.<sup>16</sup> This project seeks to redress their invidious plight.

## 3. CONSTRUCTING A PRACTICAL ALTERNATIVE INSTITUTION

In this context, it is imperative for liberal and unprejudiced Muslims to create a viable religious focal point where their Qur'anic manifestation of Islam will not only be welcomed but also serve to attract numerous other like-minded believers.<sup>17</sup> The first task for this independent mosque is to obtain a suitable property in a central location, which will become the hub for all inquiring Muslims. While

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<sup>13</sup> Implicit in this, and many of the unsubstantiated statements made here, is that because traditional Islam is not based on any reason, logic or the Qur'an itself, but is a "concocted creed", and that Hargey's interpretation is the "original Islam".

<sup>14</sup> Academically, these statements are regarded as unsubstantiated, *ad-hominem* fallacies which seem to reflect a personal vendetta against the Muslim Judicial Council. This was also very apparent in his aforementioned radio interviews. After discovering the newspaper articles regarding Hargey's involvement in a fraud scandal in the USA during 1989-1990, this claimed 'personal vendetta', found greater substantiation. (see the replicated articles from The *South Weekly Newspaper* in this article)

<sup>15</sup> This statement reveals that Hargey's open mosque does not recognise the established mosques/ places of worship of the Muslims. It also reveals that the open mosque sees the beliefs which Muslims hold and have held for over 1400 years as being "fairy tales or non-Qur'anic dogmas".

<sup>16</sup> I do not know of any Muslims who have ever been barred from entering the established Mosques of South Africa. The Ahmadi and Qādiānī sects are not considered Muslim by the majority of Muslim scholars worldwide and they were thus legally banned from the Mosques in the Western Cape.

<sup>17</sup> The intent of proselytization by Hargey's Open Mosque is another contradiction to the open nature which the organisation claims. If Hargey's claim to be "open" to all forms of Islam is true, then he wouldn't have a need to call people away from their current practices and mosques to his own.

the long-term goal is to build a dedicated state-of-the-art mosque that fuses the East with the West, the immediate priority is to acquire premises that can be modified into a multi-faceted Islamic centre to function as a bona fide mosque and also double as an educational and community resource. This pioneering institution will restore Qur'anic primacy by resisting bland ritualism and promoting a rational religion that is rooted in and relevant to 21st century South Africa.<sup>18</sup> The official mantra of this new mosque is to restore the twin R's of Islam: reason and revelation.<sup>19</sup> The Open Mosque will conduct daily as well as weekly prayers, and become a vibrant magnet for interfaith dialogue and other social programmes such as adult/computer literacy, youth club, crèche, kids' school, etc.

#### 4. AN INCLUSIVE MOSQUE FOR ALL SELF-DEFINING MUSLIMS – EVERYONE WELCOME

This new institute, unlike other mosques, will advance Qur'anic Islam, not fabricated non-scriptural fables and a chauvinist patriarchy that characterises 'popular' Islam today.<sup>20</sup> It will openly

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<sup>18</sup> This is an attempt at identifying the "pioneering" nature of the institute. Since the open mosque claims to be the pioneer, then Muslims are being told that the current Islam as practiced by Muslims, now and for more than 1400 years, is not based on Qur'anic primacy and is governed by bland ritualism and is not a rational religion relevant to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Hargey's institute is therefore saying that Muslims have not been practicing "original" and "rational" interpretations of Islam and that they should abandon 1400 years of scholarship which has been feeding them "fairy tales" and instead they should follow the interpretation of Islam by Hargey and his associates.

<sup>19</sup> This is not as "pioneering" as is claimed. The amalgamation of reason with revelation has been the point of pride for centuries in Sunni Islam. In theology, Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī (d.324 H / 936 CE) and Abū Mansūr al-Māturīdī (d.333 H / 944 CE) are renowned for achieving a sound middle ground of revelation and reason. The same applies in the genre of *Fiqh* (Islamic Law), in which Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfi'ī (d.204 H /820 CE) is celebrated by *Sunni* Muslims for his amalgamation of the *Ahl al-Ḥadīth* (revelation-based jurists) and the *Ahl al-Ra'yi* (reason-based jurists) (see Hasan, Ahmad - *Al-Shafi'i's Role in the Development of Islamic Jurisprudence*, Islamic Studies, Vol. 5, No. 3 (September 1966), pp. 239-273). The only pioneering aspect of Hargey's mosque's "mantra" is that they have referred to the amalgamation of revelation and reason as "the two R's".

<sup>20</sup> Traditional *Sunni* mosques (or "popular Islam") has been governed by the Qur'ān (as interpreted by the scholars of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah*) and by the Sunnah (represented by the Ḥadīth literature as Brown attests to, see note 11) and this is an attested academic fact proven by both Muslim and non-Muslim scholars of Islam. Barbara Allen Roberson, in the *Oxford Dictionary of Politics*, under the term *Sunni*: The core beliefs of Muslims are based on the Qur'an and Sunna of the Prophet Muhammad and centrally concern God, Muhammad, and the Umma. By the eleventh century, five hundred years after the Hijra (622, the flight of the Prophet and his followers from Mecca to Medina), a consensus on these beliefs emerged. Beyond these core beliefs, within Sunni Islam, is a diversity of interpretations and perspectives.(Read more @

<http://www.answers.com/topic/sunni#ixzz3DWvvGmT9>)

champion an erudite, enlightened and egalitarian Islam in line with authentic Qur'anic precepts.<sup>21</sup> In contrast with existing mosques, women will have equal presence, and also full parity in its governance. There will be no separate female entrances or women's screens in the prayer hall. Most significantly, this new mosque will be autonomous, non-sectarian, gender-equal, inter-racial and unaffiliated to any specific school of thought (madhab), ideology or denomination. Qualified secular experts as well as religious specialists will act as Rotational Imams to ensure that the congregation benefits from deliberate cross-pollination. In this way, the Open Mosque will foster genuine theological self-empowerment for Muslims to get closer to the Creator and humanity.<sup>22</sup>

## 5. NO DOCTRINAL INTOLERANCE, TAKFIR, OR INTRA-MUSLIM VILLIFICATION

For believers who place the Qur'an at the epicentre of their spiritual lives, it is axiomatic that no one is permitted to declare fellow Muslims to be outside the fold of Islam, irrespective of their beliefs or background.<sup>23</sup> Contrary to what the 'clergy' might claim, that is God's exclusive domain and no one, let alone any institution or individual, can usurp this sole divine prerogative. This 'takfir' is the deadly

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<sup>21</sup> According to whom? This claim is academically flawed. Hargey's version of Islam, described as "erudite, enlightened and egalitarian" is going to be whose interpretation of Islam? Whose interpretation of the so-called authentic Qur'anic precepts will be disseminated? There is a lack of erudite enlightenment about the nature of the Islam which Hargey and his associates claim to champion.

<sup>22</sup> Who are these qualified secular experts and what made them qualified as opposed to traditional scholars? Does Hargey's interpretation of Islam or of the Qur'an finds its origins within the teachings of the Prophet *sallā Llāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*, his Companions (those who have earned Allah's pleasure as explicitly stated in the Qur'an), the Successors (the direct students of the Companions) or their students who documented the knowledge of these aforementioned generations? This is the legacy or, as Hargey puts it, the concocted fairy tale dogma, which the traditional *Sunni* schools of thought have relied upon for their interpretation of the Qur'an. This is not an empty claim, and since Hargey has lost his faith in traditional scholars' views, I refer to a non-Muslim scholar for the verification of the aforementioned transmission and documentation of the knowledge of "original Islam", see: Donner, Fred, *Narratives of Islamic Origins: The Beginnings of Islamic Historical Writing*, Darwin Press, 1998. The open mosque has the interpretations of Dr. Taj Hargey to rely upon. But where does he get his facts from and what methodology can he promise Muslims which would ensure that they receive the erudite and enlightened scholarship which he has promised them? The mission and vision statement of this so-called pioneering institute provides no such details.

<sup>23</sup> This so-called "axiom" is self-contradicting. To rephrase, Hargey claims that irrespective of what a Muslim believes in, he/she will still be considered as having Islamic belief. Are all beliefs Islam then?



cancer at the heart of Islam today that must be resisted by thinking Muslims.

## 6. THE OPEN MOSQUE'S CONSTITUTION AND GOVERNING STRUCTURES

A carefully crafted constitution with stringent built-in safeguards and registration as an official NPO ensures that the Open Mosque operates in conformity with both the Holy Qur'an and South African law. Competent personnel and talented staff fill all governance and managerial posts. The Executive Board and other leadership positions are not confined to men alone. Firm legal steps have been implemented so that the Open Mosque cannot in the future betray its key founding principles of pluralism, equality, tolerance, justice and liberty.<sup>24</sup>

## 7. THE RECRUITMENT OF FREE-SPIRITED & INDEPENDENT MUSLIMS

A coordinated campaign disseminating its news and information via radio, TV, press and social media (Twitter, WhatsApp, Facebook, etc) will facilitate in generate a diverse support-base across racial, ethnic and class lines to attend the Open Mosque. Strategic adverts in the press and also the Internet will invite membership from open-minded Muslims to this landmark project. This will help to fund the critical initial phases, thereby securing its financial stability and ultimate success.

## 8. COMMITTED GROUND FLOOR SUPPORTERS OF THE OPEN MOSQUE

Many devout Muslims from all walks of life share this fervent determination to restore pristine Islam and the Qur'anic foundations

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<sup>24</sup> Notice that Hargey's Mosque is built on the five principles of pluralism, equality, tolerance, justice and liberty and not the traditional Qur'an, Sunnah, *Ijmā'* and *Qiyās*. Not even the well-known five pillars of Islam. From which Islamic text has the Open Mosque deduced these five priorities? Note: I have chosen to replicate his entire Mission statement therefore the mistake, "firm legal steps have been implemented" is intentionally left unedited here.

of the faith.<sup>25</sup> They have pledged their moral as well as material support for this important trailblazing initiative. Do you wish to join other professionals, entrepreneurs, workers, retirees, students, etc in this noble worthwhile cause? Together, we can give our talent, time and treasure to establish a logical Qur'an-based Islam for the next generation!

This is the end of the Open Mosque Mission Statement.

### **Who is Taj Hargey?**

Taj Hargey is a Cape-Town born, British academic (as he claimed in his radio interviews). The mysterious Dr. Taj Hargey is described with different credentials by various sources on the World Wide Web. Wikipedia describes him in two different articles as, "Dr Taj Hargey, imam of the Oxford Islamic Congregation" and "Raza was invited by Dr. Taj Hargey, "a self-described imam who preaches an ultra-liberal interpretation of Islam" that allows men and women to pray together and women to lead mixed congregations in prayer, to go to Oxford...".<sup>26</sup>

In the British based newspaper, The Telegraph, Stephanie Findlay (Johannesburg) describes Hargey in an article dated, 16<sup>th</sup> September 2014, as, "Taj Hargey, director of the Muslim Educational Centre of Oxford, a group of "forward thinking" Muslims" and not as a professor of Islam at Oxford University as he claimed on the South African radio stations.<sup>27</sup> After learning this and exploring the website of the MECO, it was clear that this was also an initiative by Hargey

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<sup>25</sup> If pristine Islam and the Qur'anic foundations of the faith require restoration, then the open mosque is implicitly stating that the Islam which is currently practiced by Muslims in South Africa for more than 300 years is not pristine and that the faith which Muslims have held and still hold is not founded upon the Qur'an. The unsubstantiated accusations made against South African Muslims, their practice of Islam and their faith in God by Hargey and the Open Mosque in their "Mission and Vision" statement and on public radio is by all standards (academic and otherwise) absolutely appalling. The irrationality and emotive language (and name calling) used by Hargey on public radio and on the Open Mosque website is obscene, *ad-hominem*, unsubstantiated and most certainly far from erudite and enlightened academics.

<sup>26</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oxford\\_sex\\_gang](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oxford_sex_gang), and, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Raheel\\_Raza](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Raheel_Raza).

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<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/southafrica/11097221/Muslim-academic-gets-death-threats-over-women-and-gay-friendly-mosque.html>

himself which he is now using as credentials which give the impression that Hargey is an Oxford professor of Islam.<sup>28</sup>

The Mission Statement by MECO bares a startling resemblance to that of Hargey's Open Mosque.<sup>29</sup> The MECO organisation is defined on its website as follows:

MECO is a progressive, ecumenical and forward-looking Muslim body that is in the forefront of advancing an Islam that is open and tolerant. By promoting a faith that is rooted in and relevant to 21st century Britain, MECO campaigns for the full political, social and intellectual integration of British Muslims. Since MECO upholds a religion that is based on the primacy of reason and the original precepts of the Holy Qur'an and the authentic Sunnah<sup>30</sup>, it directs believers and seekers of spirituality to consult diverse Muslim sources and links (without endorsing any specific group or particular organisation) that may contribute to a more informed, logical and pertinent understanding of Islam in the modern world.

Among a host of shady biographical material about Hargey, the following newspaper clippings are circulating on the internet:

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<sup>28</sup> <http://www.meco.org.uk/default.htm>

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.meco.org.uk/mission.htm>

<sup>30</sup> In Hargey's Open Mosque publicity has explicitly rejected ḥadīth *en masse*, as "man-made concoctions", thus one wonders which "authentic Sunnah" he refers to here, how it has reached him "authentically" and why he recognised it in Britain but rejected it in South Africa. Perhaps Hargey shares the view of a multi-faceted, developing and living Sunnah which is occasionally promoted by some orientalist and modernist scholars such as Fazlu Rahman in his, *Islam*, University of Chicago Press, 2nd edition, 1979. ISBN 0-226-70281-2. Based on his recent public statements, however, Hargey rejects ḥadīth.

# Question mark over Hargey's 'crusade'

By HENRY LUDSKI  
**CONTROVERSIAL** Islamic scholar Taj Hargey has embarked on a nationwide anti-apartheid crusade in the United States, raising large sums of money to promote what he called a "new vision".

"I want to start a newspaper which will cater for a multiplicity of views," said Hargey in San Francisco recently.

In a proposal sent to "funders" in the United States, Hargey lists several office bearers of an organisation called "The Open House — Welfare and Cultural Society".

However, Dr A Mahate of Gassy Park — listed as treasurer of the or-

ganisation — denied he was involved.

"Hargey told me in passing that he wanted to launch a newspaper and I simply wished him good luck.

"If he had approached me properly to serve on the organisation, I would have turned him down," said Mahate.

Another person named by Hargey has also denied involvement. He asked not to be identified.

In the "Open Society" proposal to potential funders, Hargey appeals to funders to "help our self-supporting non-profit multiracial organisation to launch an independent and non-sectarian anti-apartheid newspaper in South Africa, The Forum".

Hargey says the organisation has raised R275 000 since its inception. It has already purchased property, and acquired office furniture for the "newspaper's" editorial offices and printing facilities in central Cape Town.

Hargey raised the ire of the local Muslim community when he became involved in a dispute between the Muslim Judicial Council and the Ahmadi group.

Several United States computer companies approached for support have initiated local inquiries about the project of which very little is known in media circles.

Very few Muslim leaders in Cape Town are aware of the proposed newspaper.

## Murder accused disappear

GRAHAMSTOWN. — Two Port Elizabeth residents facing two murder charges have disappeared and warrants for their arrest have been issued.

Bongani Billy and Tutuzela Crosswell Silinga were part of a group of 11 Kwazakhe residents charged with two necklace murders.

Silinga absconded earlier during the trial and Billy failed to appear in court on Monday.

Earlier the defence had to apply to the court to be given an identification parade report by the state after the prosecutor had refused to hand it over.

The state claimed a precedent would be set which could be abused by defence advocates.

Mr Justice Erasmus said he could not blame the defence counsel, Mr Ronnie Pillay, for taking "strong exception" to suggestions of unscrupulous behaviour.

After the defence had received the report, they found that some of the witnesses had pointed out some of the accused in court, but had not been able to do so during the identification parade.

The trial is continuing in the Supreme Court. — AVA

## Support for embattled weekly paper

A WIDE range of organisations and publications this week came out in support of the New Nation newspaper which could face closure before the end of the month.

New Nation acting editor Gaba Tugwana said that since the newspaper was told that the Minister of Home Affairs was examining 11 editions of the paper since July 7 for contravening the emergency regulations, New Nation had been flooded with messages of support.

Organisations which had pledged support included the South African Council of Churches and the giant Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu).

Tugwana said the paper would announce a plan to fight the threat later this week.

He said it would also be making representations to the minister.

These would be based on how the paper viewed the stories cited.



PAC leader Japha Masemola, recently released from prison, is carried shoulder high by supporters at DF Malan Airport before his planned meeting with Nelson Mandela at Victor Verster this week.

PHOTO: BENNY GOOL

## Mandela denies book deal

DURBAN. — ANC leader Nelson Mandela has denied reports that a multi-million rand deal is being negotiated to publish an autobiography written while on Robben Island.

In a faxed message to sociologist Professor Fatima Meer, his biographer, Mandela indicated that her book, Higher Than Hope — was the only biography on which he had collaborated.

He denied that his attorney had offered the book to publishers at the Frankfurt Book Fair in West Germany.

Addressing her by the nickname "Fatu", he confirmed that he had written an autobiography in prison in the 70s, but did not know the whereabouts of the manuscript.

Meer, who also heads the Institute of Black Research, said re-

ports on the Mandela book were "absolutely untrue".

She said a revised edition of Higher Than Hope on which Mandela collaborated would be published shortly.

"The first edition (based on letters to Winnie Mandela and family members) was done without any contact with him but for the second we had three interviews," she explained. — Durbanews

"We will explain why we ran these stories but the entire matter is subjective. It is the opinion of the minister that counts," Tugwana said.

"We represent a specific community. The minister comes from a very different community with very different interests."

Tugwana said the warning was the beginning of a fresh onslaught on the press in South Africa.

"We are a tangible target for a government trying to appease the right wing," he said.

Three editors were this week subpoenaed in terms of Section 205 of the Criminal Procedures Act.

Edwin Linington, editor of the South African Press Association (Sapa), gave evidence before a magistrate in connection with a statement released by Cosatu to Sapa earlier this year.

Harvey Tyson, editor of the Johannesburg daily newspaper the Star and Aggrey Klaaste, editor of another

Johannesburg daily newspaper, the Sowetan, were subpoenaed to give evidence about advertisements for a welcome home rally for released ANC leaders last month.

Tyson said he would refuse to give evidence unless the matter related to a crime.

The editor of the Cape Town daily newspaper the Argus, Andrew Drysdale, was this week warned that the authorities were investigating possible contraventions of the emergency regulations.

The Association of Democratic Journalists (ADJ) described the attacks on the press as "the schizophrenic act of a government without legitimacy, morality or honesty".

"The only defence the New Nation has against arbitrary closure is the united action of all freedom-loving South Africans and the international community. We must act decisively to save the New Nation," the ADJ

said.

Meanwhile, the organiser of Saamstaan, an Oudshoorn community newspaper, Mr Derrick Jackson, has been charged with contempt of court following an article published in June.

The article, headlined "Woede na George verhoor" (Anger after George hearing), commented on the reaction to the 12-year sentence imposed on three policemen found guilty of the murder of Sandkraal activist, Andile Koba.

Jackson, of Fern Street, Bridgton, has been ordered to appear in the Oudshoorn Regional Court on January 8.

The article quoted the Human Rights Commission which expressed their "dissatisfaction" with the sentences imposed on the policemen.

Jackson is also facing charges of publishing a photograph of Nelson Mandela without permission from the prison authorities.

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Hargey's 'crusade' unshaken

## Islamic scholar in US 'scandal' over newspaper

**CONTROVERSIAL** Cape Town Islamic scholar Taj Hargey is at the centre of a major 'scandal' in the United States over alleged plans to start an anti-apartheid newspaper.

After 13 months of criss-crossing the US, Hargey has been deserted by a string of disenchanted supporters who have lost faith in his "vision" to return to South Africa to start "the first independent non-aligned multi-racial news weekly in the nation's history".

They have raised serious reservations about a man they were once inspired to follow "into the jaws of apartheid" to make his "dream" a reality.

Several of the people he listed as directors of the Open House Society Cultural and Welfare Society have denied involvement with the project Hargey claims promotes adult literacy, health education and job placement in the black community.



Taj Hargey

But the charismatic Oxford University graduate has brushed his critics aside, saying: "The project will see the light of day or it will kill me."

During his year-long crusade Hargey has received donations of cash and computer software and hardware.

**Prophet or phoney? • See page 3**



From KEN MARTIN

AUSTIN (Texas). — He swept into this city on April 3 riding the crest of a national media campaign and within two weeks had charmed 50 college students and other residents into joining his crusade to start an anti-apartheid newspaper.

But earlier recruits of TAJ Hargey of Cape Town, South Africa, have mutated. They deserted Hargey after raising serious questions about his project.

In the course of an investigation by the Austin Business Journal, Hargey was found accountable to no one for any donations of cash, computer hardware and software he may have been given during his 13 months travelling in the United States.

Experts on South African newspapers said Hargey's claim to be founding a unique newspaper is a misrepresentation.

He appears to have received the support of generous Americans who dislike apartheid but know little of politics and the news industry in South Africa.

Hargey has been travelling around the country talking to any group or reporter who will listen. He packs an appealing message: the audience eagerly accept. Whether describing apartheid's evils in the well-organized talk of a college lecturer or relating poignant recollections of childhood injustices under the racist regime, he inspires people to follow.

But many who enlisted in his cause now have serious reservations about the man for whom they decided to spend their lives and follow into the jaws of apartheid.

At least five people who would have followed Hargey to South Africa have lost all respect for him and quit the project. Many of the disenchanted ones stay in touch via telephone, airing consternations and wondering about what Hargey may be telling people in the next city, and who else may follow him blindly.

**Expenses**

Freelance journalist Betsy Spratt and several others said Hargey personally told them he was a professor at the University of Cape Town. The same claim appeared in at least five publications, including the San Jose Mercury News, San Francisco Chronicle and San Diego Union.

Even in an Austin interview, Hargey at first tried to pass off the printed misstatements about his credentials as reporting errors. Finally he admitted he had never been a professor and had left the university's payroll more than a year before arriving in the United States.

Since landing in California April 6, 1989, Hargey had allegedly received financial assistance from numerous supporters.

Layne Fischer of Fischer-Howard International Inc., a computer wholesale firm based in Redwood City, California, said Hargey was given free office space for his cause and then without asking ran up \$7500 in expenses, mostly for telephone calls and postage.

"I learned later he had used this, after it was a fair decompile," said Fischer, who herself immigrated to this country from South Africa. "More calls were coming in for him than for our own company, but we didn't mind because he was very charming, and who, he was doing it for a very worthy cause," she said.

Fischer's loss was written off by her company. Other supporters,

# Prophet or phoney?

## Eager recruits desert Hargey's US crusade

Mr M Tyala listed in the society's letterhead as chairman was Mandla Tyala, a journalist studying in this country under a Harvard fellowship.

"I have never met Mr Hargey," Tyala told the Austin Business Journal, adding that he did see Hargey on a television interview in Boston. "There are not that many black newswriters, so I would know if I had a namesake."

Asked in Austin to explain this discrepancy, Hargey said Tyala's first name was not Mandla but Moses, a man now travelling in the Ciskei, where he can be reached by telephone.

A San Francisco man who lodged Hargey for five months, spoke on condition his name not be printed and said Hargey changed the story about Tyala's first name only after being confronted with the results of his supporters' independent investigations.

The person listed as treasurer, Dr Alie Mahate of Cape Town, when contacted by the Austin Business Journal denied any involvement with the Society.

**Distortion**

"To my friends it was a big joke," Mahate said, referring to the articles about the dispute over his role in the Society that were published in South Africa. "My wife is my treasurer. I can't look after my own finances. How can I be treasurer?"

Hargey said here that Mahate was initially interested in the newspaper project but was driven away by his son, Hamied, who opposes it for political reasons. "The father liked me but the son poisoned his mind."

In both his talks and his literature, Hargey claims he is starting "the first independent, non-aligned multi-racial newsweekly in the nation's history".

That's a distortion, an observer of South African newspapers said.

"It's not true that it would be the first independent paper. He keeps saying it would be the first black-owned paper, which isn't true," said Sally Chew, who monitors the South African press for the Committee to Protect Journalists in New York City.

There are any number of small, black-owned newspapers, so that's nonsense. They're all over the country," said Irwin Masovin, co-editor of the Weekly Mail in Johannesburg. "There are up to 20 such publications."

While there may exist room for disagreement in this country about the nature of African newspapers, there can be no doubt that Hargey had done a remarkable job of garnering favourable publicity in the United States. In addition to television and radio coverage in numerous cities, glowing news of Hargey's mission has appeared in such respected newspapers as the



TAJ HARGEY: Fundraising in the United States for new "black" newspaper in South Africa

San Jose Mercury News, Boston Globe and Washington Post.

"It's amazing all these papers have written about him and not checked him out," Spratt said. "But the project seems to be a very laudable one and people admire him for the time and energy he's put into it. You cannot believe it's not true."

Former followers who abandoned Hargey's crusade said they advise anyone considering Hargey's appeal to think twice.

Hargey was even able to recruit David Bunnell — who founded such magazine grants as PC World and Macworld before moving on to start Publishing of San Mateo, California — to push computer makers for donations to his cause.

Bunnell personally signed letters to numerous industry heads, including one last August to Apple Computer founder Steve Jobs, now president of Next, Inc.

**Suspicion**

"I am actively supporting and contributing to a worthwhile project run by a non-profit interracial organization in Cape Town, South Africa, that will lead to the creation of a free and independent black press in that country and I would like to ask that you support this venture also," Bunnell wrote.

Quite apart from the allegations of his detractors, Hargey arouses suspicion because he offers no independent accounting for the money, computer equipment and software

he's been given since starting his campaign in this country 13 months ago.

When asked, Hargey admits to having received an "abundance" of computer software — indeed, sources in California say he has at least 50 to 100 of software packages stockpiled. But Hargey said his computer hardware cupboard is not yet filled.

Although Hargey was clearly troubled when confronted with the doubts of his former followers, he swore he would forge ahead until his newspaper is published.

"This paper is coming out," he said angrily. "I'll bet you my right arm and my right eye."

With his fiery past, including years of conflict with the Muslim Judicial Council and an appearance in a lawsuit against the clerical leaders that won full religious rights for a minority sect, few who know Hargey think he will give up his quest to start The Forum.

"This project will see the light of day or it will kill me," Hargey vowed.

He is not a man who inspired trust in the followers who helped him before, yet Hargey would brush aside his past and continue as if nothing happened.

"I've learned a terrible lesson. You have to be upfront, you have to be honest and everything you say must be corroborated. I want to make it up to the Betsy Spratts of the world, and I will after the paper is up and running."

In other websites, some unsubstantiated biographical material about Hargey, which is corroborated by various unrelated sources, states the following:<sup>31</sup>

So who is Taj Hargey:

Taj Hargey was born in 1955 and raised in apartheid era South Africa. Hargey studied History and Oriental Studies with a minor in Arabic and Comparative Religion at University in Durban, furthered his studies by enrolling at the American University in Cairo to study Islamic History and Theology and proceeded to gain a scholarship to complete a Doctorate at the University of Oxford.

After spending time working in South Africa and America, in 2001, Hargey returned to Oxford to become the Director of the 'Oxford Centre for British Islam'. Taj Hargey is the founding chairman of and remains affiliated with the 'Muslim Education Centre of Oxford'. Taj Hargey is married to a Christian.

Hargey's Fraudulent Past

Whilst in the US, Hargey was exposed for lying and fraud. He campaigned to raise funds for a non-existent 'anti-apartheid newspaper' and claimed he was a professor at the University of Cape Town, something which was later proven to be a lie. He conned money from various sources, including students. His fraudulent behaviour and lies can be read about in the original newspaper reports here, here and here. Evidently, Taj Hargey is not a trustworthy individual.

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<sup>31</sup> <http://mushypeas.org/history-self-professed-muslim-leader-taj-hargey-people-smell-rat/>

Whatever the truth may be, there is certainly more to Taj Hargey than what he claimed in his radio interviews and on his website. The language and arguments which he employs are laden with academic fallacies. The similarities between Hargey's American "newspaper scandal", his South African Open Mosque endeavour, and his British MECO endeavour are astounding. In America he attempted to establish the "Open House Society", which based on the articles was a complete fraud and failure. Cape Town now faces Hargey's "Open Mosque". The 24 year old newspaper article describes Hargey's "With his fiery past, including years of conflict with the Muslim Judicial Council and an appearance of a lawsuit against the clerical that won full religious rights for a minority sect, few who know Hargey think he will give up his quest to start The Forum".<sup>32</sup> Cape Town once again faces a blast from the past in an astonishing case of history repeating itself. There is no longer a mystery about why the strong emotive language was used specifically against the MJC. It appears that Hargey is back for a vengeance, but will the public be as inspired by his "open" propaganda or will they take a lesson from this page in the history chronicles? Perhaps further investigation is required into the mysterious board of trustees' membership of the Open Mosque. No such information has been made public except for a few vague descriptions and based on the articles attached, that is not a good sign for Hargey's followers.

### **The Problem the Muslim Community has with the Open Mosque and Hargey.**

Firstly the very concept of an open mosque or open Islam is self-contradicting if Hargey's interpretation is to be taken as the definition in question.

How open is the Open Mosque? In his 567 Radio interview, Hargey stated that the Open Mosque is open to non-Muslims as well. Based on what the mission statement says, it is only open to all progressive, open-minded & forward-looking Muslims. This is a

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<sup>32</sup> *Prophet or Phoney*, South News, Ken Martin, April – May 1990, see previous newspaper article.



clear contradiction. This also excludes traditional Muslims, as traditional Islam is usually juxtaposed to progressive Islam in Western academia. Furthermore, Hargey's initiation and involvement in the "banning of the Burka" saga in Britain, reveals that Hargey and his Open Mosque seems to be open to all, but traditional Muslims<sup>33</sup> .i.e. Muslims who follow the Ash'arī, Māturīdī or Ḥanbalī theology systems; Muslims who ascribe to Ḥanafī, Mālikī, Shāfi'ī or Ḥanbalī Islamic law; Muslims who ascribe themselves to Ṣūfī, Tablīghī, Deobandī or Barelwī, brands of Islam. Basically the Open Mosque is not open to the majority of Muslims in the world (based on these findings).

Another problem with the idea of being "open" and still defining ones practice as Islamic is, where does the definition end? Which views are going to be considered acceptable and which are not? Since Hargey has major issues with Islam as practiced by traditional Muslims, one would expect him to define his "original, pristine and Qur'ān-centric" version of Islam in an erudite and enlightened fashion as he claims to be capable of. Could one thus be a Muslim who believes in the Trinity, the Crucifixion of Jesus (upon him be peace), Original Sin, Baptism, the evil nature of homosexuality, the prophethood of Mirza Ghulām Aḥmad, that sayyidinā 'Alī was God incarnate, that Ezra was the son of God, Halakhah (Jewish law) or perhaps Satanism? Or would one be excluded from the Open Mosque because of holding such beliefs, thus having to initiate a More Open Mosque? Where does Hargey draw the line for Islam?

Strangely Hargey says that he is not forcing anyone to come to his mosque, but merely providing an alternative mosque for like-minded "progressive Muslims". This is strange because Hargey clearly goes out of his way to criticise everyone else's Islam. He seems to be saying and at times has actually said (on his radio interviews on 567 Cape Talk) that the traditional scholars are mostly the high school drop outs and that he represents the true erudite,

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<sup>33</sup> <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2695181/Why-I-Muslim-launching-campaign-ban-burka-Britain.html>

enlightened and egalitarian scholarship. This was mentioned before, but is pertinent to the point being made here. Everyone is wrong and Hargey is right? He seems to believe that over 1400 years of scholars and their research is wrong and only he and his ilk have understood true Islam.

Hargey openly criticises and even mocks traditional Muslim scholars or the clergy, as he calls them (even though traditional Muslims do not believe in a clergy), and criticises their concocted interpretations and fairy tale version of Islam. Muslim and non-Muslim academics, specialising in Islam, have clearly defined what the sources of Islam are, and how traditional scholars derive their interpretations of the Qur'ān and Islam, the burden of clarification is upon Hargey to define his sources and methodologies.

Muslims have an “open” choice of whose interpretations of Islam they would prefer to follow. Over 1400 years of established scholarship which comprehensively and coherently looks at revelation (The Qur'ān and the Sunnah) as well as reason (*Qiyās*) among other sources such as scholarly consensus. This culminates in the established and defined sciences of Fiqh (Law), Uṣūl al-Fiqh (Legal Theory), Ḥadīth (Prophetic Traditions), Ḥadīth sciences, *Mantiq* (logic), *Falsafah* (philosophy), *ʿIlm al-Kalām* (Theology and Creed) and a number of other sciences for which this essay does not allow space for details.

Alternatively Muslims could follow the Open Mosque as established by Hargey and his associates. The task of understanding Hargey's endeavour would have been easier had it been presented in an academic manner. An academic approach would have afforded this “pioneering” endeavour more credit among Muslims. Instead Hargey has used the public (not Muslim, but public) platform to insult Muslims, their most deep-rooted beliefs and religious practice by simply writing them off as the “concocted medieval fairy tale distortions of the clergy”. This approach, expectedly, enraged the Muslim public whose intelligence has clearly been defiled and

underestimated by Hargey and his attempt at establishing an Open Mosque.

Since Hargey has failed to define and delineate his interpretation or method of interpretation of open progressive, egalitarian, gender-just, Qur'ān centric and non-sectarian Islam, one is left with only his public statements by which to derive further understanding. Hargey champions that his Open Mosque is a pioneering venture, but is it? The Qur'ān only approach has been identified as early as the time of the Prophet *ṣallā Llāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* said, "soon a time will come when a person will sit on his/her couch, talking about my teachings and saying that among us we have the book of Allah. Whatever it makes permissible, we deem permissible. Whatever it deems prohibited, we deem prohibited, but know that what the Messenger of God prohibits is like that which God prohibits" and elsewhere, "I have been given the Qur'ān and the like of it along with it..."<sup>34</sup> Since then the movement has resurfaced time and time again over the centuries, but has thus far failed to take flight. The reason for this is that Islam *was* founded upon the Qur'ān, but also through the teachings of the Prophet *sallā Llāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*, and the two are inseparable. Many scholars have written and argued this issue which obviates the need to discuss it further here.<sup>35</sup>

It is sufficient to note that without ḥadīth, practicing Islam the way the Prophet practiced and taught to his Companions, will be impossible. How many compulsory prayers should a Muslim perform daily? When exactly should those prayers be performed? How many units or *raka'āt* per prayer? What is the *niṣāb* (the minimum amount of money upon which alms to the poor is due, when a year expires? What breaks ones ablution? How does one get married and divorced and what are the conditions? These are

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<sup>34</sup> This has been narrated authentically by Abū Dāwūd, Ibn Mājah, Aḥmad and others.

<sup>35</sup> For examples of such scientific studies of the Sunnah and Ḥadīth, see *Sunnah wa Makānatuhā fī Tashrī' al-Islāmī* by Dr. Muṣṭaphā as-Sibā'ī; The collective works by the contemporary non-Muslim ḥadīth scholar Harold Motzkī and refer to note eleven for the work on Ḥadīth by the contemporary American Ḥadīth scholar and academic Jonathan A.C. Brown.

questions which cannot be answered by using the Qur'ān alone. It would be interesting to know how Hargey answers them.

The other considerations made by Hargey's pioneering Islam are considerations which have been argued by modernists, feminists and revisionists. Hargey seems to be saying that his Mosque is open to all of these movements; the question again is to what extent is this institute open to "other" concepts. Hargey says that he does not endorse homosexuality or the Qādiānī faith, but his mosque is still open to them. At times during his radio interviews, Hargey gave the impression that men and women will be standing together, mixed in the same rows. On his Channel Islam International (CII) interview, however, he claimed that men will be on one side and women on the other, in the same row and that the prayers would still be led by men. This once again mystifies the reality of the Open Mosque (or temple as some scholars of the Muslim Judicial Council in Cape Town have refused to give it recognition as a mosque).

### **A Proposed Solution**

The general traditional Muslim public are awaiting a response from the *'Ulamā*. Some people are expecting a reaction to come from the Muslims in the same derogatory fashion (or worse) in which it came from Hargey. Here we should be careful as Hargey has already won a law suit against people who gave in to their urge to aggressively, albeit verbally, defend their views against Hargey. The British Telegraph reported, "Dr Taj Hargey won substantial damages from the Muslim Weekly newspaper in a High Court libel case after it accused him of not being a true Muslim."

The reality is that we do live in the Democratic Republic of South Africa and thus we can't subject anyone to what we believe to be the mainstream or traditional *sunni* interpretation of Islam. This also means that as the Aḥmadī/Qādiyānī sect have a mosque in Athlone and the Shī'ah have a mosque in Ottery, so too Hargey will be able to establish what he calls a mosque in Wynberg and there is very little that can legally be done about that.

At the same time we can express, as is our right as traditional Muslims, that we do not recognise Hargey's institute as a mosque in the traditional sense. We can and we certainly do take objection to Hargey's public assaults and obscene, *ad-hominem*, slander of traditional Muslims, their belief, their practice and the legacy which we champion as traditional scholarship. We could, if we so wished, take further legal action against these defamatory crimes committed by Hargey on public platforms, but perhaps we should also tread with caution.

The Muslims of South Africa have to realise that they live in a democratic society and are a Muslim minority. This means that anomalous and alien views (from the traditional view point) will time and again surface in the guise of liberalism and pluralism or even in the guise of mainstream Islam. Our dissatisfaction and disapproval, however, should always be voiced and our voices and amicable attempts at solving these issues will always rein triumphant by Allāh. As for this world, when we seek knowledge and choose to practice on the knowledge we attain based on authentic sources and interpretations passed down from the Prophet *ṣallā Llāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*, his Companions and their students, as opposed to the whims and fancies of a few individuals, we will always be guided to the truth *in shā Allāh*.

يُرِيدُونَ أَنْ يُطْفِئُوا نُورَ اللَّهِ بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَيَأْبَى اللَّهُ إِلَّا أَنْ يُتِمَّ نُورَهُ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْكَافِرُونَ  
 [٩:٣٢] هُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ بِالْهُدَىٰ وَدِينِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظْهِرَهُ عَلَى الدِّينِ كُلِّهِ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ  
 الْمُشْرِكُونَ [٩:٣٣]

They seek to extinguish the light of Allah by blowing through their mouths; but Allah refuses everything except that He will perfect His light howsoever the unbelievers might abhor it. He it is Who has sent His Messenger with the guidance and the True Religion that He may make it prevail over all religions, howsoever those who associate others with Allah in His Divinity might detest it. [Qur'an 9:33]

Post Script (updated on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2014): According to an official report on the BBC news website, the Open Mosque “has been closed indefinitely”.<sup>36</sup> This was shortly after its first *jumu'ah* congregational prayer which was attended by 18 worshippers and not 300 worshippers as Hargey claimed to expect. I must add here that throughout the mainstream media reports about the Open Mosque, the false claims by Hargey about his “pioneering” endeavor, has been favorably highlighted. In the report about the closing of the Open Mosque, Hargey is quoted as saying, “This is not a gay mosque. But I will not turn anyone away based on race or sexual orientation”. These claims also include that Hargey’s Open Mosque was a “pro-gay mosque”, “South Africa’s first gay-friendly mosque”<sup>37</sup>, among a host of favored modern and Western human rights ideologies. The truth is that there is *no* traditional Sunni Mosque in Cape Town (and I presume elsewhere in the world as well), which has ever barred people from entering these places of worship. Race, sexual orientation, gender, economic position and even religion has never been scrutinized, prejudiced or used as a criterion for admission by Muslims at the entrances of the mosques of Islam.<sup>38</sup> Mosques by their very nature, according to traditional Muslim scholars are open and ALL ARE WELCOME.

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<sup>36</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-29328196>

<sup>37</sup> *ibid*

<sup>38</sup> This is not a claim that Islam condones the personal practices of the individuals of such groups, but a clarification that they are not only allowed, but welcomed to attend the mosques for spiritual guidance and education.