

THE DAILY MAIL

Telephone: +44 (0)20 7938 6000

Fax: +44 (0)20 7937 3981

*Northcliffe House,
2 Derry Street,
Kensington,
London, W8 5TT*

25 February 2014

Farooq Ahmed
Secretary General
The Muslim Council of Britain
PO Box 57330
London E1 2WJ

By email mediaoffice@mcb.org.uk
and post

Dear Mr Murad

Thank you for writing in response to Richard Littlejohn's article 'Jolly Jihadi Boys' outing to Legoland'. We are sorry to hear that you and your co-signatories found it offensive.

Richard Littlejohn is a columnist who, as is well-known, uses satire to address many topics. Among the targets of similar spoof columns in the last year have been the Prince of Wales, the Chief Executive of the Girl Guides, the Chiefs of the three intelligence services, the Editor of the Guardian newspaper, the BBC and the Police Federation.

In this case the subject of his satire was radical cleric Haitham al-Haddad, who is reported as saying that Jews are 'descended from apes and pigs', homosexuals are criminals and those who leave Islam should be killed. Indeed the day after Mr Littlejohn's column appeared the Evening Standard reported Dr al-Haddad as saying there is a 'proper' way of performing female genital mutilation.

It is in the nature of satire to take the language of extremists and turn it against them. That is what Littlejohn did in this column: he made no criticism of Islam, or of Muslims in general, and made clear in his fifth paragraph that al-Haddad's 'views are abhorrent to mainstream Muslims'.

It is also worth stressing, as you were advised by telephone on Friday, that Mr Littlejohn's article was prompted by a report in The Times which said that it was leading Muslims who had criticised Legoland for taking al-Haddad's booking for a 'family fun day'. Significantly, one commented: 'Would they be happy to let the BNP and other extremist far-right groups hold their family fun days there?'

The Daily Mail greatly values its many Muslim readers, who make an enormous contribution to life in Britain. If some have taken Mr Littlejohn's column literally, not as the spoof it was intended to be, then we are very sorry but assure you there was no intention to offend Muslim communities in general. I am sure you will agree that freedom of expression is one of the pillars of British democracy, and for that reason our columnists are not censored or told that certain subjects are off-limits.

This article has now become the subject of a complaint to the PCC and we will be responding to it in the appropriate way.

Yours sincerely



Charles A Garside
Assistant Editor