

For Immediate Release: 4 September 2007

## **Public meeting about Olympics Mega-Mosque follows massive 10 Downing Street petition**

### **Supporters and opponents to meet in “hard-hitting but civilised” East London debate that discredits Ken Livingstone BNP slur**

For the first time supporters and opponents of the proposed Olympics mega-mosque at West Ham will meet to air their differences and debate the key issues, at a public meeting this Friday evening (7 September) at Stratford, East London.

Following the recent huge petition against the mosque which attracted over 250,000 signatures on the 10 Downing Street website, the atmosphere is expected to be electric as both sides put forward their arguments head-to-head in front of the audience.

Support for the mosque will be led by Abdul Khaliq Mian, who is a former mega-mosque project manager and spokesman and also a former parliamentary candidate (East Ham, 2005) and local council candidate (Newham 2006) for George Galloway's Respect party. Leading for the opponents will be Councillor Alan Craig, leader of the Christian Peoples Alliance group on Newham Council. The debate is being organised by Newham Muslim voluntary sector group *Islamic Circles* and is open to the public.

“I'm delighted we are to debate the mega-mosque issue face-to-face at last,” said Cllr Craig, who has been the leading East London opponent of the project. “I first asked for discussions with mosque promoters Tablighi Jamaat over a year ago but they have always refused to meet. This is the first real opportunity to do democracy, and I expect the debate to be hard-hitting but civilised.”

Cllr Craig also criticised the stance taken by Ken Livingstone over the mega-mosque. “This debate will also serve to publicly discredit the Mayor's offensive and unfounded slur that opposition to the mosque is by nature Islamophobic and BNP-inspired,” said Alan Craig. “It isn't. Many Muslims oppose the Tablighi Jamaat mega-mosque, and non-Islamic local opposition is rational, reasoned and based on respect for our Muslim fellow citizens. We stand against BNP hate-mongering.

“Of course the Mayor's unreasoned biased backing for the mega-mosque simply strengthens the cause of all opponents.

“Fortunately he has no planning powers over the Olympic zone, so he cannot directly impact the final planning decision about the mosque.”

Ends

**Editors Notes**

1. **Time & Location.** The debate is to be held at 6.15 pm on Friday 7 September at Ithaca House, 27 Romford Road, Stratford, London E15 4LJ, next door to the Ibis Stratford Hotel and 5 minutes walk from Stratford station. Entrance is free and is open to all the public including the media.
2. **Contacts.**  
Organisers *Islamic Circles* can be contacted on 07956 983609 and at [info@islamiccircles.org](mailto:info@islamiccircles.org)  
Cllr Alan Craig can be contacted on 0207 476 5381