

Unmesh Desai AM

London Assembly Member for City and East



**More London Estate
London
SE1 2AA**

2nd August 2019

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to you ahead of the new season as the London Assembly's Labour spokesperson on Policing and Crime to discuss the ways we can stand together to tackle hate crime in football.

In 2018, a Kick it Out report found that in the UK, half of all fans surveyed had witnessed racist abuse (50%), but less than half would know how to report it (40%). Further to this, I received a written answer from the Mayor of London, which stated that just 116 hate crime offences had been reported at football stadia between January 2015 and December 2018. With over 150,000 fans attending games across London each week during the football season, these figures show that there is undoubtedly a significant underreporting of hate crimes occurring across all football stadia in London.

In light of this, I would like to ask what actions your club will be taking in the forthcoming season to ensure that fans are aware of how to report hate crimes that occur within your stadium, to increase reporting and deter offences.

When recently questioned at the London Assembly's Police and Crime Committee meeting, the third sector hate crime think tank, Hope Not Hate, stated that they felt that clubs could do more within their grounds to help increase the number of hate crimes that are reported, such as clear messaging within the ground on how to report an incident should they see one. I have also met with the Met Police's hate crime unit who have expressed concerns about hate incidents at football grounds. I am currently seeking to gather evidence on the current procedures in place at football grounds across London. As such I would be grateful if you could:

- Outline the club's current procedures for reporting hate incidents at or around the stadium
- Advise of any awareness raising initiatives which the club runs to encourage the reporting of hate crimes in or around the stadium (for example whether posters are displayed in the stadium informing people of how to report incidents).

Furthermore, I am asking for all clubs across London to issue statements distancing themselves publicly from the group known as the 'Democratic Football Lads Alliance'. Whilst the group themselves have repeatedly stated that they do not promote a racist, far-right mantra, their rallies have been attended by well-known neo-Nazis and have featured definitively Islamophobic speeches. Moreover, the social media pages for the group have featured racist comments and posts and have promoted support for "Tommy Robinson" rallies. Either through wilful ignorance or lacking the organisation to do so, the DFLA have failed to deter or expel members who are using the group as a vehicle to express xenophobic and Islamophobic views both at their rallies and online.

Ahead of the new season I am therefore calling on all London Clubs to issue a simple statement that publicly distances themselves from the DFLA, along with any other measures you may feel are necessary to prevent fans from your club from being associated with the organisation. Strong leadership from football clubs on this issue will have a real impact in deterring the growth of a group now seen as the natural home for those who wish to promote hate speech and division across football grounds and in wider society.

For more information on the pernicious influence of the DFLA amongst football supporters, please see the Faith Matters report *"The Democratic Football Lads Alliance, Offshoot Groups & Engagement with Anti-Muslim Prejudice"*. This is available to download on the Faith matters website and I am happy to send a hard copy of this to yourselves to review should you wish.

Finally, I would like to wish the club the best of fortunes for the forthcoming season and I look forward to receiving your response.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'U Desai', with a horizontal line underneath.

Unmesh Desai AM
Assembly Member for City & East London