



Anas Sarwar urged to help Islamic scholar living under fatwa

John Boothman

Anas Sarwar, Labour's new Scottish leader, is being asked to help lift a fatwa that has been hanging over an Islamic scholar for two decades.

Glasgow Central Mosque issued a ruling against the publisher Paigham Mustafa in 2001, after he wrote a series of articles arguing that practices such as the death penalty for apostates, stoning for adultery, and female genital mutilation had no basis in the Quran.

The decree, which is still in force, accused him of "satanic thoughts" and called on Muslims to "terminate these elements and to protect the youth from this temptation".

Mustafa, who regards the fatwa as an incitement to commit violence against him, has written to Sarwar, a Glasgow MSP, as a leading figure in the Muslim community, asking him to talk to imams about revoking the decree. He said: "This

fatwa is an incendiary device making accusations of blasphemy and insulting Islam. This, as we know, can have serious consequences. It is appalling that such a document should exist in this country, let alone that it has been around for the past 20 years."

He called for the edict to be withdrawn, arguing that it contradicted the Quran's decrees allowing freedom of belief and a right to question.

Mustafa protested his innocence of blasphemy charges and insisted that he favoured nothing more than tolerance and understanding between communities.

Violence and incitement to violence, he said, are entirely contrary to the teachings of the Quran. He is understood to be the only UK citizen living under a fatwa and said he had received threats as a result, as well as detriment to his business interests.

Neither Sarwar nor Glasgow Central Mosque commented.



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