

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New counter-terrorism strategies needed: Research findings from London Metropolitan University

Research from London Metropolitan University which highlights the urgent need to reform the UK's counter-terrorism strategies will be presented at a timely event in Birmingham.

According to the research carried out in London and Birmingham, the ideas behind counter-terrorism measures and the way politicians, policymakers and the media discuss who might be responsible for bombings are very similar to those in the period when there were IRA bombings in Britain.

The research, *'Suspect communities'? Counter-terrorism Policy, the Press, and the impact on Irish communities and Muslim communities in Britain*, will be presented as part of The Festival of Social Science (29 October – 5 November), run by the Economic and Social Research Council.

The research team interviewed key people connected with the Irish and Muslim communities, the media, politics and the law, and carried out mixed Irish/Muslim discussion groups. In these groups people discussed the common ground in the experiences of Irish communities and Muslim communities and found the comparison helpful, particularly in terms of feeling less isolated.

Prof. Mary Hickman, Director of the research, said: "The research reveals the extent to which the Irish in Britain lived with the fear of association with the IRA and the impact it had on their lives."

"Lessons must be learnt. While the focus of contemporary counter-terrorism policy remains fixed on rooting out extreme ideas it encourages the public to treat Muslims as potential 'suspects' or legitimate objects of abuse."

"Future policies must ensure they do not undermine the trust Muslim communities have in state institutions nor their sense of belonging in Britain."

The findings will be presented at an evening event, *Counter terrorism and Irish and Muslim communities*, being held in Birmingham on Tuesday 1 November.

The evening will focus on how to take forward the research findings, particularly the very positive experience of the mixed Irish/Muslim discussion groups.

The research, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), was led by Prof Mary Hickman at London Metropolitan University with Prof Lyn Thomas and Dr Henri Nickels. They worked alongside Dr Sara Silvestri, a specialist on Islam in Europe at City University London.

-ENDS-

NOTES TO EDITORS:

Event details:

Presentation on Tuesday 1 November 2011
6.30 - 8pm (refreshments from 6.15)
Church Room, Carrs Lane Community Centre, Birmingham, B4 7SX

Attendance is free but registration is limited.

To reserve a place please contact suspectcommunities@londonmet.ac.uk
Phone: 0207 133 2927.

Two of the research team are members of the Institute for the Study of European Transformations (ISET) at London Metropolitan University, and a third was based at City University London. Professor **Mary J Hickman** is an expert on Irish migration and Diaspora, and in immigration and social cohesion in Britain. She is the founder of the Irish Studies Centre and the Director of ISET. Professor **Lyn Thomas** (ISET) is a specialist in media and cultural studies. Dr **Sara Silvestri** is Senior Lecturer in Religion and International Politics, in the Department of International Politics at City University London. Dr **Henri Nickels** was the Research Fellow (ISET) on the project; he currently works for the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, Vienna, Austria.

For more information, to interview Professor Hickman or for an electronic copy of the findings, please contact:

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The Festival of Social Science is run by the Economic and Social Research Council which runs from 29 October to 5 November 2011. Events from some of the country's leading social scientists, the festival celebrates the very best of British Social Science research and how it influences our social, economic and political lives - both now and in the future. This year's Festival of Social Science has over 130 creative and exciting events aimed at encouraging businesses, charities, government agencies; and schools or college students to discuss, discover and debate topical social science issues. Press releases detailing some of the varied events are available at the Festival website. You can now follow updates from the Festival on twitter using #esrcfestival.

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