

# JMA Report 2014

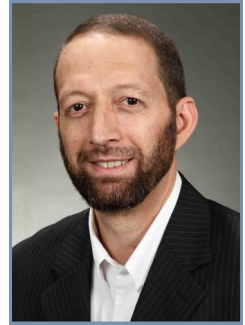
“Engaging Responsible Media”

# DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

It is with delight that I present an overview of JMA's achievements for 2014. We have had another effective year working on a number of important cases acquired through monitoring and referral — a suitable selection is included in this report. We have also had the opportunity to engage with several key community-based organisations assisting them to improve their media handling and public relations capabilities. Our media crisis management and training services have also been further enhanced.

I extend my sincerest gratitude to all our clients and patrons as well as to the team dedicated to JMA's success. The support and contribution has been invaluable and we look forward to your continued patronage.

*Dr Zachariah Matthews, Executive Director*



## MEDIA MONITORING CASES

### Islam Wrongly Implicated in FGM Report

Sunday 12 January 2014

JMA wrote to a journalist about a news report published online by The Australian newspaper. The report outlined the sad case of a nine-month old female child taken overseas to be 'circumcised' as alleged by police. The girl's father was later arrested and "charged with aid/abet/counsel or procure female genital mutilation." The report, in the process of reviewing the problem of FGM, focussed exclusively on the Islamic faith. JMA posited that since the faith background of the child or her father were unknown at the time of the publication, the report wrongly implied that Islam was the motivating factor in the case. The journalist conceded that some relevant clarification was omitted from the newspaper report but that the intention was not to implicate Islam in the procedure.

### False Assumption Corrected

15 February 2014

On the 8th of February the Daily Telegraph in a report online about a 12-year-old bride referred to Dr Eman Sharobeem, Director of the Immigrant Women's Health Services, as a "leading Islamic health services counsellor." JMA wrote to the Telegraph to highlight a 2012 [ABC](#) report which described Dr Sharobeem as an "Egyptian Coptic Christian." In response, the newspaper deleted the word "Islamic."

### Sun-Herald removes "invisible beings"

Saturday 3 May 2014

In the article "Meet the hijabistas" which first appeared in the Sun-Herald's Sunday Life magazine on 27 April 2014, the following by-line was included beneath the headline: "Muslim women are no longer invisible beings behind their veils, with a new wave expressing their fashion flair." JMA wrote to the newspaper concerned that the sentence was problematic. The phrase "invisible beings" may have offended many women by perpetuating a negative stereotype of those who wear the veil. The paper agreed to delete the sentence online.

### Yahoo 7 News changes "killed" headline

Saturday 31 May 2014

In a news report published online on 9 May 2014 by Yahoo 7 News the headline read "Saudi woman killed defying driving ban." JMA wrote to Yahoo 7 to highlight that the headline was inaccurate and misrepresented how the woman died. The headline falsely implied that she may have been killed by authorities for defying the ban when in fact she tragically died in a car crash. The media company agreed to change the headline to "Saudi woman dies in crash."

## SMH agrees to remove 'Islamic' alias

Saturday 30 August 2014

On Monday 18 August 2014 the *Sydney Morning Herald* published a report about a 19-year-old man who was arrested by police for an alleged 'religious hate crime.' Just Media Advocacy wrote to the paper with concerns about: significant omissions including the man's real name, why the incident was described as a religious hate crime?; and the use of the phrase 'Islamic alias.' JMA argued that important, relevant information was omitted from the report and that the use of the phrase 'Islamic' alias provoked in the context of the story a negative association that unfairly stigmatised the religion. The paper subsequently included the man's real name, agreed to remove the word 'Islamic' and indicated that it was unable to obtain any further details about the incident from police.

## Telegraph amends 'prayer meetings' headline

Monday 29 September 2014

On Monday 22 September, the Daily Telegraph published an online report with the headline "Goulburn Jail cancels Muslim prayer meetings as prisoners go berserk." JMA wrote to the newspaper outlining that the headline did not accurately reflect the substance of the report. The report quoted an unnamed source suggesting that a good behaviour privilege was withdrawn in response to verbal abuse and that this started the 'riot' and not the cancelling of prayer meetings. The newspaper amended the headline removing the reference to prayer meetings being cancelled. JMA then referred the newspaper to NSW Justice's statement issued later that day which made no reference to prayer meetings and also clarified that there was no religious basis to the 'disturbance.'

## LETTER:

### High Muslim unemployment dig

Monday 25 August 2014

In response to a JMA complaint the *Daily Telegraph* agreed to publish the following letter to the editor in its print edition: In the article "Last drinks in Lakemba: Tim Blair takes a look inside Sydney's Muslim Land" (*Daily Telegraph* 18/8/14), the author asserts that "the Islamic community's high rate of unemployment" leads to inevitable conflict. The reference to the high unemployment rate is taken from a 2011 report by researchers from the University of Newcastle using 2006 census data. What Mr Blair failed to include was the fact that the high unemployment rate was unusual given the Muslim population had a higher educational attainment than the population as a whole (18.5 per cent of Muslims had a bachelor degree or higher compared to only 15.6 per cent for the total population; similarly, 27.5 per cent of Muslim Australians had a year 12 or equivalent qualification compared to 17.8 per cent for the entire population.) Significantly, the research concluded that the unexpectedly high unemployment rate was due to Muslim jobseekers struggling to deal with structural obstacles such as inadequacy of services and discrimination. It is ironic that employment statistics are being misused to further stigmatise this section of the Australian community; a community that has been unfairly stereotyped and marginalised since the 'Post 9/11 War on Terror.'

Zachariah Matthews

Executive Director

Just Media Advocacy Sydney

## CONSULTANCY SERVICES

### Advocacy Packages

Package 1 (monitoring, acknowledgement) — \$600

Package 2 (communicating, collaborating) — \$1,200

Package 3 (formal complaint processing) — \$2,400

### Consultancy

Media Management (plans, releases, etc) — Enquire for rates.

Media Training (interviews, advocacy, etc) — Enquire for rates.

Your patronage is important for JMA's work.

Contact us if you wish to purchase a package or engage our services.

[info@justmediaadvocacy.com.au](mailto:info@justmediaadvocacy.com.au)

More details on the back

## Tanveer misrepresents 'Open Letter' to ISIS

Sunday 19 October 2014

In an opinion piece written by Tanveer Ahmed for *The Australian* newspaper on 8/10/14, he grossly misrepresented aspects of an open letter to ISIS with factual inaccuracies and statements it did not include. JMA wrote to the newspaper about the errors. On 16/10/14 the paper amended and published only part of a letter sent by JMA to the editor. Below is the entire JMA letter submitted:

*In the opinion piece "Muslims must engage with Islamic ideas that give rise to terrorism" (8th October 2014) Tanveer Ahmed referred to a recent open letter by more than 120 scholars "refuting theological points that were the basis" of the group known as ISIS. Ahmed wrote that the letter "says that unbelievers should not be killed unless they openly express their lack of belief and faith." This claim is factually incorrect. The actual letter in reference to the specific case of declaring a Muslim as a non-Muslim stated that: "It is forbidden in Islam to declare people non-Muslim unless he (or she) openly declares disbelief." Ahmed also wrote: "The letter does go on to state that such killings have no basis in the modern context." This too is nowhere to be found in the letter. Even more disconcerting is this quote from Ahmed's article: "This letter is not meant for a liberal audience." A simple Google search has revealed that the quote does not belong to the open letter but rather to Nihad Awad from the US as reported by the Huffington Post on 24th September. It is of grave concern that Ahmed may not have read the letter himself. (Submitted Sunday 12/10/14)*

## TERMINOLOGY

### The J-word

JMA wrote to a number of journalists regarding their use of the term "jihad". Often misused to stereotype the Islamic faith as a violent religion. People of Muslim faith have constantly argued that it is wrong to equate "a noble religious concept with violence/terrorism." (Common Ground News)

In most cases it was unclear in what sense the term was being used. For example, was it to mean:

- Terrorism-related violence,
- State-sanctioned legitimate armed warfare, or
- Peaceful, non-violent activism to help or improve?

The Press Council particularly cautions about the use of terms that "could imply that the group as a whole was responsible for the actions of a minority among that group."

### Just Media Advocacy "Engaging Responsible Media"

Suite 98, Seabridge House, 377 Kent St, Sydney NSW 2000, Australia

E: [info@justmediaadvocacy.com.au](mailto:info@justmediaadvocacy.com.au) W: [www.justmediaadvocacy.com.au](http://www.justmediaadvocacy.com.au)

P: 02 8001 6365  @JMAAdvocate  Just Media Advocacy

*JMA engages the media to promote accurate and responsible reporting.*

*Copyright © 2015. All rights reserved.*