

Please find below some safety guidance for Shia communities regarding:

- 1) Travelling to Iraq (Ziyaraat)
- 2) Local Commemoration
- 3) Safeguarding

As in previous years, several Shia Muslim community organisations have come together this year to produce guidance for our local communities, to ensure that the British Shia Muslim community is able to commemorate the events of Karbala in a safe and secure manner. With the current political climate of Islamophobia and Shiaphobia, and growing concerns around extremism, it is essential that we remain attuned to the sensitivities of our local areas.

Having communicated with various official agencies, we have produced the following guidelines for our communities. Please do share with other centres and your respective membership.

1. Travelling to Iraq (Ziyaraat)

Summary:

- **Build in extra time when travelling**
- **Please be patient and be ready to answer questions if needed.**
- **See guidance on children travelling and carrying large amounts of money.**

There is still increased scrutiny monitoring those who are travelling to Syria and Iraq (including those travelling via Turkey) to ensure supporters are not going to join the Daesh forces, and similarly others are not going to join the various militias. We are working alongside the National Counter Terrorism and Policing Centre, as well as the Borders Agencies to try and ensure smooth journeys to and from Iraq this year for Ziyaraat, as we have done previously.

- a. Please ensure you read the FCO Travel Advice (which is regularly updated) before travelling. <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/iraq>

[Iraq travel advice - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/iraq)

www.gov.uk

Latest travel advice for Iraq including Safety and Security, Entry Requirements, Travel Warnings and Health.

- b. Please note that there is still limited support in Iraq should there be any incidents.
If going on Ziyaraat, we recommend travelling as part of an established group rather than individually or with a small group.
- c. Although officers have been made aware of the reasons for why people shall be visiting Iraq, please do be patient when asked about your travel plans as it is important that the relevant agencies are able to establish the reasons for travel as part of their duty to safeguard the public.
- d. It would be advisable to build in additional time when travelling and be prepared to answer various questions about your trip. Police officers working at UK ports have certain powers under the Terrorism act which facilitate the questioning of passengers, although in the vast majority of cases it is unnecessary to use them. [These powers are fully explained here.](#)
- e. Please ensure that minors (aged under 18) are not travelling unaccompanied. If this is the case, it is likely that they will not be allowed to travel. Ensure they have an allocated 'guardian'. Parents should ideally prepare a letter for children to carry with them explaining that they have parental consent, that they have designated a specific individuals as a travel companion and

providing contact details for someone authorities can contact for more information - this contact person should be able to speak English to simplify the process.

- f. If carrying large amounts of money please do be prepared to explain what this will be used for. Please familiarize yourself with current legislation around this - [which can be downloaded here.](#)

We have notified the National Counter Terrorism and Policing Centre, as well as the Borders Agencies to expect groups travelling to go to Iraq for religious visitation so hopefully they will be aware, but please do explain that many Shia Muslims tend to visit Iraq specifically during these months.

2. Local Commemoration

Summary:

- Contact your Safer Neighbourhood Team and let them know of events

- Be vigilant at all times

- See more specific guidance on what you should avoid during Julus

Please do ensure you remain vigilant in your local areas and try not to disturb neighbours where possible. There is funding available from the government for places of worship that need increased funding. More information can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/places-of-worship-security-funding-scheme>

- a. Get in touch with your local Safer Neighbourhood Team to inform them of your programme of events.
- b. You may wish to arrange for your own security and stewards for the peace of mind of your congregation. This may include CCTV cameras and/or hiring professional security guards.
- c. Please do be considerate of your neighbours and ensure that noise late at night is kept to a minimum and that attendees park appropriately not blocking the residences of the local community.
- d. If holding a Julus or procession please **do not** take out black flags. Similarly do not hang these outside of your centres or homes - please avoid using imagery that may be misinterpreted where possible. **It is best where possible to have signage in English so that those passing by can understand the context of the procession.**
- e. Send over photographs of any items you may be carrying in these processions to your local Safer Neighbourhood Team.
- f. When holding any events outside of your centre (even if on the road outside) please ensure that the content is in English and so those passing by can understand. Foreign languages can lead to misunderstandings.
- g. Do ensure that any sermons, literature or recitations do not increase sectarian or religious tensions by avoiding any offensive or inflammatory language about religious figures of other communities. Do focus and emphasise the importance of Muslim unity and shared human values.

3. Safeguarding

Summary:

- Be proactive when engaging with your child's school

With Prevent (the Counter Terrorism policy, aiming to prevent extremism) established as a statutory duty, we raised concerns that children commemorating over these months may be flagged up in schools unnecessarily. Whilst this message will be communicated to local Prevent teams it would be helpful if:

- a. Parents were proactive in engaging with their child's school, explaining the story of Imam Hussain (as) and explaining how we as a community eulogize and commemorate over these months. Template letters for this can be requested if needed and www.whoishussain.org is a useful resource to direct non-Muslims to.
- b. It is likely that those children who take part in matam may display physical signs of beating their chest. We are aware of cases where this was picked up as a safeguarding issue and the child referred to social services. It would be helpful to explain that this is a standard cultural practice, where children are not coerced or endangered in any way. If you do need assistance with any similar cases, kindly do get in touch.
- c. If looking more specifically at self-flagellation/zanjeer it is important to be aware of health and safety guidance on any activities that could subject children to physical harm.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact any of the below organisations for more information or assistance.

Thank you and wassalaam,

The Council of European Jamaats, ManCom & Shia Ithna'ashari Community of Middlesex (SICM/Mahfil Ali)

The above organisations can be emailed at:

CoEJ: secretariat@coej.org

ManCom: youthprojectcommunity@gmail.com

SICM: info@sicm.org.uk