

In re: Hisham Sliti

COMES NOW, ALASTAIR CROOKE, under oath, and states as follows:

1. I am Director of *Conflicts Forum*, a non-profit organisation that promotes the understanding of political Islam to policymakers and that engages with opinion formers and political leaders within political Islam in order to understand and follow its evolution in response to current events.

2. Among my previous professional experience, I have been special security adviser to European Union High Representative, Javier Solana in 1999 -2003; special adviser to the European Union Special Envoy to the Middle East Peace Process 1997 – 2003; and a staff member of President Clinton's Fact Finding Committee, led by Senator Mitchell in the causes of the Intifada 2000 – 2001.

3. I contributed to mediation, management and resolution of conflict in Ireland, South Africa, Namibia, Afghanistan, Cambodia and Colombia between 1972 and 1997. From 1983-7 I served as a Diplomatic Officer at the British Embassy Islamabad - and in that capacity was responsible for reporting on the course of events in Afghanistan under Soviet occupation, and for liaison with the Afghan political leadership resident in Peshawar and Quetta, both of which lie adjacent to the Pakistani-Afghan border. This diplomatic reporting role necessitated my spending a large proportion of my time in Peshawar and in the border areas where the Afghan leadership was settled.

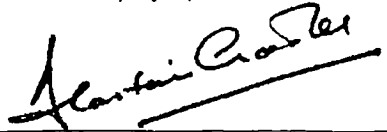
4. I have been asked to provide a brief statement based on my experiences concerning the use of guest houses in the region.

5. Staying in a guest house is often the only option for a single male in Afghanistan or the border region of Pakistan. Given the local mores, it is almost impossible to stay with a family, unless they are rich and have separate accommodation intended specifically for receiving non-family guests. Visits to Afghan houses required the female members of the household to withdraw completely from the visitor's sight. Any refreshment served was brought only by male servants or male members of the family. Women were not evidence – even to the extent that they would not be seen moving in the further reaches of the house during the course of a visit - whilst going, for example from a reception room to a dining room. Usually, the women and girls confined themselves to a single upstairs room during the visit by a stranger. The disruption to the household caused by this segregation clearly was tolerable only for short visits: It would be impossible for any household to function under these conditions of segregation, were a visitor actually to be lodging in the house. Its female contingent would become prisoners: unable to move in their own home, to visit the bathroom or to prepare food in case of inadvertently being seen by the visitor – hence the need for male visitors to be accommodated in some form of Guest/Rest House – either private or commercial.

6. There were few hotels, and I also used guest houses where there was no other option.

7. I do not believe it possible to give an empirical assessment of how many people staying in guest houses could be described as terrorists by whatever definition. But it is possible to state the opposite, which is to say that any number of people who are not terrorists stay in guest houses.

I make the foregoing statement under the penalties of perjury of the United States this 30 day of November, 2008.



ALASTAIR CROOKE