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East End unites against EDL threat

A powerful local alliance in the East End of London has come together to make clear that Tower Hamlets is No Place For Hate – and that the English Defence League (EDL) is not welcome here.

The EDL has stated its intention to bring its message of Islamophobia, bigotry and intolerance to our borough on 3 September. Its website bears the provocative message "Tower Hamlets: we're coming".

This is not the first time that EDL racists have threatened to march in the East End. They made similar threats last year. Those threats prompted local people, political parties, trade unions, cultural, youth, faith and community organisations to come together and form United East End.

Now United East End is once again building a diverse coalition to organise a community celebration to coincide with and oppose the planned EDL visit on 3 September this year. We see this event as part of a proud history in Tower Hamlets of challenging prejudice and promoting equality.

United East End has received the full backing of Lutfur Rahman, the mayor of Tower Hamlets. Local councillors of all parties have voted unanimously to support a United East End petition that condemns the EDL and calls for any EDL demonstration to be banned from the borough.

We oppose discrimination of all kinds. We have worked and campaigned together for many years to build a successful, multicultural place where many different communities and lifestyles live peacefully side by side. No amount of EDL propaganda or provocation will take that away from us.

United East End presented its petition at a full Tower Hamlets council meeting on 13 July. It was signed by a range of local community leaders including the Reverend Alan Green (Tower Hamlets Inter-Faith Forum), Rebecca Shaw (Rainbow Hamlets LGBT Group), Dilowar Khan (London Muslim Centre), Phil Sedler (Tower Hamlets Tenants Federation), Sister Christine Frost (Neighbours in Poplar), John McLoughlin (Tower Hamlets Unison), Alex Kenny (East London NUT) and Max Levitas, a veteran of the 1936 Battle of Cable Street.

United East End is working in partnership with the national organisation Unite Against Fascism. The two organisations worked together last year to hold a peaceful demonstration of 5,000 people on 21 June 2010 that expressed the unity of our community and successfully kept the EDL out.

To launch preparations for the 3 September event, United East End and Unite Against Fascism are holding a **public rally on Friday 29 July**, 7pm at the London Muslim Centre on Whitechapel Road. Speakers will include the Right Reverend Adrian Newman, the new Bishop of Stepney, in his first public engagement in the borough.

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