



Picture: Guy Smallman/www.guyssmallman.com

Thousands turn out for historic day that defied the racist and fascist English Defence League

‘Magnificent victory’ for unity in Tower Hamlets

We saw a magnificent victory for the anti-fascist movement in Tower Hamlets on 3 September. Thousands of local people joined forces with trade unions and campaigners to come out onto the streets of east London and to oppose the racist English Defence League. The EDL’s thugs could not set foot in the borough.

This victory was only possible because of the broad anti-EDL coalition that had been built up over the previous weeks and months. Unite Against Fascism worked alongside trade unions, faith groups, LGBT activists, the mayor of Tower Hamlets and anti-racist groups.

It’s this kind of unity that tips the balance of forces against the EDL and ensured they were kept out of the borough. And that unity is central to UAF’s strategy against the EDL and other fascist organisations.

Tower Hamlets was a victory, but we cannot be complacent. We know that the EDL will try to hold their anti-Muslim hate rallies again. We saw that even when the EDL’s marches are banned, they hold equally unacceptable “static demos”.

And the shocking events in Norway on 22 July tell us that the EDL’s agenda of hate can have murderous consequences.

If we don’t stop the EDL in its tracks there will be many

more Anders Breiviks.

In the wake of Tower Hamlets, UAF is calling on the home office and the authorities reclassify the EDL as racist organisation. It’s outrageous that police officers claim the EDL “are not extreme right wing” and that Muslims should “engage” with them.

Let’s judge the EDL on what they actually do, not what they claim they are about. EDL thugs in Barking & Dagenham have attacked Asians in the streets and tried to storm an anti-racist meeting organised by local councillors.

That’s just two examples of many.

But it’s what we do on the ground to stop the EDL that will make the difference. UAF stands in the tradition of Cable Street and the Anti Nazi League. We want to bring together the widest possible alliance to defeat the fascists. And we campaign against the Islamophobia that the fascists use to build their organisations.

We need your help to do this, both as individuals and as workers and trade unionists. So please join UAF today if you haven’t already, and get your union branch to affiliate. If we come together in unity, we can sweep the EDL off our streets.
Weyman Bennet, UAF Joint National Secretary

EDL 'summer of flops'

THE racist and fascist English Defence League (EDL) announced a series of marches over the summer aimed at stirring up hate. The EDL targeted **Maidenhead, Dewsbury, Derby, Middlesbrough, Halifax, Plymouth, Cambridge, Telford** and **Blackpool**. These summer "demonstrations" would climax in a march on the East London Mosque in **Tower Hamlets** on 3 September.

The EDL bragged that the Tower Hamlets march would be "the big one". Their march coincided with the 75th anniversary of the Battle of Cable Street, when East Enders stopped Mosley's Blackshirts from marching on Jewish neighbourhoods.

But in each town and city a coalition of antiracists, trade unionists, community leaders and others joined the local Muslim communities to oppose the EDL. Instead of a "summer of hate" the EDL had a "summer of flops" as the displays of unity and solidarity became defiant celebrations of our multicultural society.

The EDL's first stop was in **Maidenhead** and **Dewsbury** on Saturday 11 June. They called a demonstration in Maidenhead ostensibly to oppose a planned Muslim cultural centre. The EDL bussed in some 100 supporters. But instead of a welcome, they were greeted by around 150 antiracists, local residents and members of the Muslim community.

Around 200 people from Dewsbury and neighbouring areas of West Yorkshire showed their support for multiculturalism at the event organised by Kirklees UAF and supported by trade unionists and faith leaders. The EDL were relegated to a car park.

Weekend of 'marches'

On the weekend of 9 July the EDL planned to march through a host of cities. Their "protest" in **Derby** fell through, instead some 500 revellers turned out for a Love Music Hate Racism festival.

In **Cambridge** 2,000 people from a wide variety of backgrounds came together to march through the city, outnumbering the 200 EDL "protestors" by ten to one.

The unity march organised by Cambridge UAF won widespread support from political figures, union reps and community leaders.

That was reflected in the wonderful turnout on the day and in the banners, flags and speakers from the NUT, Unite, CWU, PCS and Unison unions and the trades council. The demonstration reflected a great spirit of unity and solidarity with the city's Muslim population, who are the main targets of the racists.

Richard Howitt, the MEP for the East of England, described an "emotional welcome" as the march arrived in Mill Road, home of the local mosque. Shopkeepers came out to cheer, while people from the mosque handed out sweets — and later hosted a dinner for the demonstration.

Howitt said, "People turned out to show the community is antifascist and is united in its revulsion of the EDL."

Rain on their parade

On the same day some 100 antiracists in **Middlesbrough** marched to join 300 local Muslims who were assembled at the Waterloo Road mosque. The antiracist protestors were welcomed into the mosque — and shelter from the pouring rain — in a wonderful atmosphere of unity and solidarity. In contrast around 200 EDL supporters had to stage their event in a rain-soaked car park.

In **Halifax**, people from all communities held a unity event to show opposition to the EDL march. Local councillors and trade unionists came together with the Muslim community to enjoy music and speeches. The antiracist event swelled to more than 250 as a groups of local youths, many of whom had congregated at the local mosque, joined the march — to cheers and applause.

Local councillor Faisal Shoukat said the EDL were "racists who are not welcome in our town". Protest organiser Kevin Mottram from Halifax UAF said: "In Halifax, we live and work side by side. I have taught in a local secondary school and I am proud of the multicultural mix of here."



Locals turn out in Portsmouth to show their opposition to the EDL march (left). Young Muslims join a unity event in Dewsbury, West Yorkshire (below). There were unity marches in a host of towns and cities over the summer.



Meanwhile, bands of EDL thugs caused trouble in and around the city, with a group breaking out of their caged protest area to try to intimidate people before being rounded up by police.

No shelter in port city

Hundreds of people demonstrated through **Plymouth** to oppose a planned march by the EDL there. The racists believed they would be welcomed in this historic naval port, but they were wrong. Locals gathered instead for the Celebrate Diversity in Plymouth event organised by Plymouth UAF, Plymouth Trades Union Council and Plymouth City Council Unison.

There were speeches by Paddy Ryan, a 91-year-old WWII veteran; Alison Seabeck MP; Tudor Evens, leader of the Labour group on Plymouth City Council; councillors Chas Singh and Philippa Davey; Jeremy Guise from Unison and Michael Bradley from the Right to Work campaign.

Some 500 people then marched through the city centre to a great welcome. The wonderful turnout was bigger than organisers had hoped — outnumbering the 150 EDL racists who were corralled by police at Plymouth Hoe and in a pub.

Own goal

On the same Saturday around 400 people demonstrated in the Wellington area of **Telford**. The turnout, overwhelmingly from the town, included trade unionists, members of the local Muslim community, young people and fans of football club AFC Telford.

The EDL was banned from marching by the Home Office but they still staged a "static protest". They mustered some 300 thugs from London, Berkshire, Essex and Yorkshire for their event.

In contrast, there was a great feeling of solidarity at the unity march, with flags and banners from Unite, Telford Unison, Telford and Shropshire Trades Council, the PCS and NUT.

The unity demonstration heard from local unions, faith groups and campaigners, before marching through the town. The demo was joined by football fans angry that the EDL had forced the cancellation of a home game. Fans marched a banner which declared, "Bucks against racism" — the club's nickname.

In **Blackpool** antiracists joined a UAF day of action aimed at exposing the lies being peddled by the EDL and Nazi BNP.

The racists and fascists want to exploit the tragic cases of missing schoolgirls Charlene Downes and Paige Chivers to promote race hate against the local Muslim community. ■

Building solidarity in Tower Hamlets

THOUSANDS of antifascists, trade unionists and members of the local community marched in victory through Whitechapel after the EDL failed in its bid to demonstrate in **Tower Hamlets** on Saturday 3 September.

Only 600 supports of the EDL made it to their final rally point — at Aldgate, outside the Tower Hamlets borough boundary in East London. The racists and fascists had bragged that they were coming to the heart of Tower Hamlets to “march into the lion’s den”. Despite a national mobilisation, they failed utterly.

Instead the day belonged to antifascists and antiracists, with an electric atmosphere of solidarity as white, black and Asian people, of all religions and none, came together.

Throughout the day, the antiracists gathered, with speeches, trade union banners, flags and music at the Unite Against Fascism/United East End protest close to East London Mosque, with anti-EDL protesters and local people also gathered directly outside the mosque and occupying key road junctions and streets to make sure EDL supporters could not enter the borough.

The groups converged at the junction of Whitechapel Road and Commercial Street in the afternoon and cheered the news that EDL leader “Tommy Robinson” faced arrest for breaking bail conditions. Some 72 EDL members were arrested before the racists and fascists were escorted away by police.

Rail workers

The first blow against the EDL was struck early by the RMT rail workers’ union, which prevented the organisation’s planned “muster” at Liverpool Street station, by threatening to close the station down if they were allowed to gather there.

They had already been refused any venue in Tower Hamlets, including Sainsbury’s car park. The EDL were instead forced to gather at Kings Cross — after their fallback plan to meet at pubs in Euston was scuppered when the pubs declared they would not host the racists either. Their journey south was then held up when RMT members closed the tube station.

The EDL were eventually escorted by police to Aldgate. A group of EDL members, who went direct to a pub in Liverpool Street, showed the violent face, throwing flash bombs, attempting to attack passers by and setting fire to a journalist.

But the EDL were unable to enter Tower Hamlets, instead moving through the City of London to their rally point. Tommy Robinson arrived at the EDL event disgracefully dressed up as a rabbi. “I can’t wait to take this shit off”, he said before sparking scuffles with police.

When the EDL had left the area, antiracists marched in their back down Whitechapel Road, chanting “Whose streets? Our streets!”, and “Black and white unite and fight”. As the march passed the East London Mosque, demonstrators broke into spontaneous applause.

The mosque is the symbol of the area’s Muslim community — the particular target of the EDL’s anti-Muslim racism.

UAF national officer Martin Smith said, “Today we have won. We haven’t had anybody arrested. We have stopped the EDL coming into this borough. Tommy Robinson has been arrested. We have marched on the streets today, the EDL have gone and we have won.”

Unions

The UAF/United East End demo had earlier heard from speakers including CWU deputy general secretary Tony Kearns, East London Mosque’s Dilowar Khan, former MEP Glyn Ford, veteran local antifascist Phil Maxwell, Terry Stewart of LGBT group Out East, former council leader Phil Maxwell and a range of other local trade union and community representatives.



People from all communities took part in magnificent demonstration in Tower Hamlets (above). Faith leaders join the local mayor and councillors in the victory march outside East London Mosque (left).

Former mayor of London Ken Livingstone sent a message of support, saying: “This is a fitting response to those who peddle hatred and fear.”

The Morning Star newspaper described the day as: “Victory. Victory for the anti-fascist movement, victory for the labour movement and above all victory for the East End in all its vibrant array of races, religions, languages and communities.

“That’s the only conclusion to draw from a day when the fascists were not only stopped but sent packing in humiliation from the streets of east London — again.”

Musicians and DJs added to the atmosphere of unity and solidarity, with trade union banners from all over the country lining the street.

The UAF/United East End mobilisation was called as it became clear that the EDL still intended to come to multi-racial Tower Hamlets for a “static protest”, despite a Home Office ban on marches.

The aim of the local alliance was to show the greatest possible opposition to the racists and fascists and ensure they could not threaten the borough’s multiracial, multicultural community. The brilliant day of solidarity showed why that was right.

Campaign

The first public event of the campaign began on Friday 29 July when some 700 people joined a rally called to mobilise local opposition against the EDL march on the mosque.

The rally was organised by UAF and United East End at the London Muslim Centre. They heard speakers from across Tower Hamlets’ diverse community call for unity.

The meeting began with a minute’s silence to remember the Oslo victims of Anders Breivik, the fascist inspired by the EDL and its vicious anti-Muslim racism. Three Norwegian trade unionists addressed the rally.

Tower Hamlets’ mayor Lutfur Rahman, former mayor of London Ken Livingstone, and community leaders from Muslim, Jewish, Christian and other faith groups were among the hugely diverse line-up of speakers.

They were joined by trade union reps from the Tower Hamlets Unison branch, East London NUT and the Unite London region, Rainbow Hamlets LGBT group, two school students and a group of Tower Hamlets councillors.

Max Levitas, a veteran of the Battle of Cable Street, raised >>

the roof with an inspiring speech. He told the audience: "It took organisation in the struggle against the racists and fascists. On the day of 4 October there was 100,000 people at Aldgate and Gardiner's Corner... The people of Stepney, dockers, tailors, pensioners, never got divided and came onto the streets.

"The fascists will never march through this area — but it won't be done by talking about it. We've got to take action... we've got to ensure the people of Tower Hamlets know what's taking place, with leaflets and loudspeakers going through the area.

"Above all, unity has got to play its part. We are going to win this struggle because we are unified."

Lessons

Ken Livingstone also drew on the lessons of Cable Street, noting that in 1936 Jewish residents were the fascists' main target, while the EDL now tries to whip up racism against Muslims.

Livingstone said, "As Londoners came together to stop the fascists marching against the Jewish community 75 years ago, we must come together to stop their successors threatening the people who now live here."

Tower Hamlets mayor Lutfur Rahman, who was joined at the rally by a group of local councillors, said there was "no place for hate" whether on grounds of race, religion or sexuality.

"We are one Tower Hamlets and we have no intention of letting the EDL divide us," he said.

UAF joint secretary Sabby Dhalu wrote, "EDL demonstrations have led to riots, with violent attacks upon police officers, Muslim, Asian and black communities, Mosques, Sikh and Hindu temples. Its actions are aimed at inciting hatred against Muslims with placards saying 'Allah is a paedophile' and chanting 'Burn down a Mosque'."

The campaign kicked off with a series of neighbourhood meetings organised with the help of the council. Hundreds of young people turned out to heed the call for unity, and reject any provocation by the racists associated with the EDL and the Nazi British National Party (BNP).

These neighbourhood meetings were held alongside mass campaign of leafleting in the area. Many volunteers turned out to leaflet the public, markets and workplaces. Local trade unions held meetings to coordinate their response and gave vital support to the campaign.

It was here that the spirit of solidarity was built for the magnificent mobilisation on Saturday 3 September — one that draws on the spirit of the Battle of Cable Street, which the East End will be commemorating in this its 75th anniversary.

Document produced by Unite Against Fascism, September 2011



Standing and marching together in a brilliant show of unity in Tower Hamlets, East London (left and below) on Saturday 3 September. The RMT railworkers union delivered the knockout blow to the EDL on the day after it shut down stations were the fascists planning to "muster".



Join Unite Against Fascism

Name/organisation

Email

Address

Postcode Phone

Trade Union College/school

Membership rates: **£24/£12** (students & concs) Organisations: local **£50**, regional/national unfunded **£80**, national trade unions and other national organisations under 100,000 members **£200**, over 100,000 members **£300**

Membership fee: £ Donation: £

Please make cheques payable to **Unite Against Fascism**, PO Box 68229, London SW1P 9WZ

To join online go to **uaf.org.uk** call **020 7801 2782** or email **info@uaf.org.uk**



National convention 'Celebrate diversity and multiculturalism. Oppose Islamophobia and racism!'

Hosted by **One Society Many Cultures**
and **Unite Against Fascism**

Saturday **15 October**
TUC conference centre,
Great Russell St,
London **WC1B 3LS**

£20 organisations **£10/£5** (concessions)
All welcome!

Register and pay online at **uaf.org.uk**
● **020 7801 2782** ● Email: **info@uaf.org.uk**
www.onesocietymanycultures.org ● **uaf.org.uk**