

The second incident worthy of note was the public burning of a poppy by the Islamist extremists of 'Muslims Against Crusaders' in Kensington, timed to coincide with the observation of two minutes silence for British war dead on 11 November. The press – seeing another Anjem Choudhary/Islam4UK set of puppets appearing on their radar – reacted with predictable apoplexy. In particular, the Daily Express – which has never bothered to distinguish between Muslim and Islamist - led its coverage with 'Muslim Cowards Burn Poppy at 11am', and contrasted the stunt with the dignified observation of the rituals of national mourning taking place elsewhere around the country. The paper's leader column suggested Muslims 'should be encouraged to seek out the societies the feel such passionate kinship towards' since 'they do not belong in this one'.

The dialogicality of stereotyping is clearly in evidence in this case. The usual self-created, bearded and robed bogeymen chant death threats to British servicemen, while the press look on with ill-concealed glee and sharpen their pencils for more anti-Muslim copy. This pathetic ritual is played out every few weeks, but also in countless other minor incidents that are less reported.

In this case, a result of the double-sided rabble rousing antics of protesters and press was an attack on a mosque in (faraway) Portsmouth. The shocked imam condemned the Kensington protesters. However, his words indicated the schism which has come to characterise community attitudes towards war, at the same time forcing us to confront the way in which the British Legion poppy appeal has this year focused on the relatives of those killed in more recent, and more controversial conflicts. Imam Muhammad Uddin commented: "They have the right to remember them [those killed in war] in your own way and we have the right to remember them in our own way and we shouldn't interfere with each other's [ways]...."It's a matter of respecting each other, it's not a matter of religion. In a society, whether we're Christian or Muslims, we should respect each other."

Rituals of national mourning are notoriously ideological. Yet how can we achieve the catharsis of shared national grief when our current foreign policy divides us so drastically?