C.I.D.A.C.
Commission of Inquiry into Discrimination Against Christians

REPORT for CIDAC Panel: Pastor Dia Moodley (DM)

CIDAC hearing date:	13 March 2025
Years of events:	2017-2021
Employment at time of events:	Church Pastor
Issues:	Series of complaints about public preaching done by DM and his team. He had taken the initiative to begin a working relationship with police. DM was subsequently served with a warning notice, prohibiting him from engaging in the public domain with a range of people holding specific beliefs. Refusing to sign this notice, he was subsequently issued with another one. On a number of occasions, DM and his team were subjected to racial abuse, were assaulted, had their signboards destroyed, and received death threats.
Was there a legal outcome?	Yes
Sex:	Male
Denomination:	Baptist
Use of data:	Unrestricted
Evidence:	Evidence bundle

Background

DM began public preaching in Bristol about seven or eight years ago. He chose to contact the Avon and Somerset Police (ASP) to notify them about his plans, a step designed to build a relationship with the constabulary. He notes that, previously, a deacon from his church had been arrested by ASP for public preaching, and DM considered what lessons could be learned from this case. Establishing a relationship would be his way of avoiding the circumstances that might have led to the deacon's arrest. DM says the police saw his request as "very unusual". Eventually, he got to meet police at monthly meetings.

Public preaching

One reason why the police interacted a lot with DM, he says, is because many complaints were being made about crowds building up around him and his team. He describes his preaching as "interactive", saying: "I will take a question from the public, provided that I can ask a question back." He says the crowd grows from two to 100 people within minutes. A policy was followed by DM, to pause the preaching when crowds grew too big. He wanted to avoid being accused of breaching the peace. Once the crowd had dispersed, the preaching would continue. Subjects for preaching included biblical marriage, gender, sexuality, abortion, evolution, Islam, etc. DM says the subject for preaching and its corresponding Bible verses are prepared in advance, for what is typically a four-hour Saturday 'outreach'. A sign is held up on which it says: "Ask any question". There are often one-to-one conversations with the public. He also engages in apologetics, comparing the Bible with the Koran and the Bhagavad Gita.

Responses from the public and police

Crowds varied, DM says, being made up of those listening "eagerly", and troublemakers seeking to destroy his signboards. DM discovered that people called the police because they felt offended by his messages. He believes that police were influenced by "personal biases". For example, they'd urge him to stop preaching, when persuaded by the crowds to do so. These episodes were conveyed by DM to the inspector at the monthly meeting at which feedback was exchanged. DM recalls times when the constabulary sent letters to

him, apologising about a certain inspector who "acted illegally when they seized our signs." On some occasions, two constables were present during his preaching, but, DM reports, mostly a Police Community Support Officer was sent who, he notes, holds limited powers.

He says that officers told people in the crowd that DM is "deeply offensive", that he shouldn't be listened to, and suggested that he spoke against their religion. Police told the public that, "we're ready to take your complaint." They built up a case against DM and his fellow church preachers, he explains, and asked people to complain. He didn't know then, but later discovered, that undercover police were sent to do filming. DM believes that complaints emerged because someone's "worldview is being challenged." Some officers told DM that they were 'old guard', and said they wouldn't respond to every public complaint because preachers are free to speak.

The officer who met DM at the monthly meeting was, he felt, cooperative but, following his promotion, DM didn't feel his replacement was positive. The new officer would say the constabulary didn't have officer cover for four hours, i.e. the duration of his preaching. Cover was then offered for two hours, which DM accepted. Subsequently, DM was told there was only cover for one hour. These further time limits were rejected by DM, and when he chose to preach, regardless of available cover, police told him that his safety couldn't be guaranteed. DM reports that he was asked not to preach on particular subjects like abortion, and to pre-submit to police the subject he chose to cover ahead of his preaching, which he refused to do.

Warning Notice

DM was served a warning notice during one monthly meeting.[1] According to this notice, he was prohibited from speaking to certain people during his preaching, including evolutionists and atheists. "I wasn't allowed to compare Christianity to any other religion," he says. He also wasn't permitted to use language deemed derogatory against the LGBT+ community. He was barred from using a PA system and from inviting others to preach on his behalf. DM believes he and his team hadn't broken the law. Refusing to sign the notice, he was warned it, "would escalate into a criminal case if I continued to preach." A lead inspector, who said he was Christian, told DM that his preaching was "down to interpretation." DM answered that they were meant to talk about the law and not hermeneutics. "Tell me what law I've broken," he asked the inspector, but he says he was given no answer. The inspector said there were Christian police officers who attend church and "don't agree with what you're preaching."

Following legal intervention sought by DM, a second and shorter warning notice was issued to him. This notice was, he understands, valid for about six months, during which time he "took to other forms of evangelism, but still maintained some street presence." Upon expiry of the notice, he continued legal action, in order to prevent a repetition of recurring problems with the police.

Police report

DM cites a 15-page investigative police report about his preaching. It contained testimonies against him from shopkeepers, though he says he committed no hinderance to trade. The report mentioned his megaphone used for preaching. He explains Bristol had no policy on decibels and so, "we implemented our own policy." Also cited is a consultation the police had with a Church of England leader in Bristol. This leader, he says, said that he and his church "have no idea what sin, hell, and judgment is," and suggested that DM visit an Anglican Church, to "learn about their books and their policies on gender and sexuality." Some officers who were assigned during the preaching claimed that it had caused them traumatic breakdowns, such that they called in sick. In this respect, DM cites subjects that would have featured in the preaching: that Jesus is the only way, life begins at conception, marriage is between a man and a woman, and that humans didn't originate from monkeys.

Legal action

One week before his case was due to be heard in court, DM says, the ASP constabulary settled out of court. The police also paid about £70,000 in costs.

Police responses to abuse, assault and death threats

He reports that he and his team were assaulted, had their signboards destroyed and had hot and cold liquids thrown at them. He explains that police would often say they didn't see the respective incidents, and if they accessed CCTV, it was then claimed there was "no coverage". He laments the fact that police didn't take further action when he presented evidence to them.

He and his team weren't only religiously attacked, but also racially. Abuse from the crowd included, "Go back to your country where you come from," and "You don't belong here". DM notes that his congregation is predominantly non-white, with people originating from fifteen countries. An organization called SARI,[2] had on DM's behalf asked the police to send out officers each time he and his team preached, a proposal that was actioned. Previously, for about a year, police would arrive on the scene, either following complaints from the public or from DM and his team.

He was once knocked unconscious, suffered a concussion, and left injured for weeks. He was "forced" to accept a community resolution by police, meaning that charges wouldn't be brought against the perpetrator. The man was ordered to write a letter of apology, which DM says he never saw. On one occasion, potatoes were thrown, which he says, though aimed at him, were instead hurled at his wife who accompanies him. Crying, she was bent over in pain. On another occasion, SM recalls a man was "very violent towards us" (all captured on his body-worn camera). A police officer nearby was called over nine times, but refused to intervene. The officer said, "You've asked for this. You've called it upon yourself. You shouldn't be here speaking on this subject. If you want to be safe, go home." The lack of police action in investigating crimes against DM and his fellow preachers has meant that his church members distrust the police.

On some occasions, DM experienced grave hostility from some Muslims. Muslim men made death threats to him, Muslim women were verbally abusive towards him, while "some of the worst offenders are young Muslim girls," he says. Following these experiences, DM felt the need to inform the Imans in the community about these episodes. He explains "I wanted to sit down with an imam and say, 'Hey, do you know what's happening in the community? How can we work together?" DM reports there was no response, and neither was there a response from the police when he reported the death threats.

Separately, he has been spat at "quite a bit" by people claiming to be from the LGBT community. In his attempt to "build bridges" with this community, DM felt the need to reach out to it, but this was refused.

---

[1] Editor's note: this Community Protection Notice was issued on 20 October 2021.
[2] Stand Against Racism and Inequality.