

Anti-gay Muslim sheik Shady Alsuleiman attends Turnbull's dinner

The Australian, 12:00AM June 17, 2016, Geoff Chambers, Queensland Bureau Chief, Brisbane
Rick Morton, Social Affairs reporter, Melbourne



Anti-gay Muslim leader attends dinner with PM

Homosexuality in Islam: Grand Mufti and President of Imams Council0:54



Australia's Grand Mufti and President of Imams Council declines to comment on homosexuality in Islam

June 17th 2016



Sheik Shady Alsuleiman and Grand Mufti Ibrahim Abu Mohamed leave Kirribilli House last night after attending the Prime Minister's dinner. Picture: James Croucher.



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Malcolm Turnbull last night hosted at Kirribilli one of Australia's most senior Islamic leaders who has condemned homosexuality for "spreading diseases" and attracting "evil outcomes to our society".

Four days after 49 people were shot dead in a gay nightclub in Orlando by Islamic State supporter Omar Mateen, Sheik Shady Alsuleiman was among dozens of Muslim leaders invited to the first ever

Iftar — the evening meal at which Muslims end their daily fast during the holy month of Ramadan — to be staged by an Australian prime minister.

Sheik Alsuleiman, who was elected president of the Australian National Imams Council last year, arrived at Mr Turnbull's Iftar dinner alongside Grand Mufti Ibrahim Abu Mohammad.

"What's the most common disease these days?" he said in a sermon uploaded in YouTube in 2013. "HIV, Aids, that's so common and there's no cure to it. And when did it exist? Just decades ago, and more diseases are coming."

He said it was "homosexuality that's spreading all these diseases".



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Mr Turnbull, who is the MP for the Sydney seat of Wentworth, which hosts the annual Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, was forced to condemn his guests' comments during the feast.

"Views like this are wrong, unacceptable and I condemn them," he told The Australian.

Sheik Alsuleiman was joined at the dinner by Australian Federation of Islamic Councils president Hafez Kassem who said he was "very upset" by the Orlando massacre but suggested people should abstain from homosexual acts or be treated with "medication" if they could not. "There is no punishment, there is a treatment," he said. "Our sharia says treatment. We have to give treatment, medication, like the prophet said force yourself (to abstain from) something like this," Mr Kassem said.

Shady Alsuleiman comments on homosexuality0:33



President of the Australian National Imams Council, Shady Alsuleiman says that
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The dinner came a day after Mr Turnbull promised to examine why Islamic cleric Farrokh Sekaleshfar, who had defended the death penalty for homosexuals, was not on a visa “watch list”.

The British sheik left the country voluntarily on Tuesday night after it emerged he had said of homosexuality that “death is the sentence” and “there’s nothing to be embarrassed about this”. Supreme Islamic Shia Council of Australia head Kamal Mousselmani, who also attended the Kirribilli feast, defended Sheikh Farrokh Sekaleshfar’s comments about gay people saying it was “his opinion”. “He (Sekaleshfar) said, in some places, in some governments they might be punished to death ... it does not mean we agree with this,” Mr Mousselmani said.

“It’s a sin but it does not mean go kill them. It’s prohibited for you to do ... whoever kills will go to hell. God will punish him in hell. If my son for example would become gay I would not talk to him. This is my opinion, this is my right.”

Despite assuring The Australian while entering Kirribilli House they would answer questions after the interfaith dialogue, the Grand Mufti and Sheik Alsuleiman left the event half an hour early and walked quickly to their car, declining to answer questions.

The sheik later released a statement, saying: “I reject the claim that I made statements wishing or wanting punishment against the gay community or the individuals. I have previously noted passages in the holy Quran which do not support homosexuality. However, I always follow such statements with a personal commitment to tolerance and encouragement that all Muslims and all people approach all individuals, no matter their faith, race or sexuality, in a considerate and respectful way.”

In a speech at the event last night, Mr Turnbull discussed the weekend’s massacre in Orlando. “Acts of terror ... are perpetrated to divide us along lines of race, religion, sect and sexuality — but that kind of hatred and division must not prevail,” he said.

Mr Turnbull earlier told The Australian “mutual respect” was the key to the success of the country’s “diverse, tolerant, multicultural society”, and condemned Sheik Alsuleiman’s comments. Bill Shorten said there should be “no tolerance for this kind of inflammatory language”. Deputy Greens leader Adam Bandt could not comment last night as he was at a memorial for Orlando victims.

Prominent Muslim businessman Talal Yassine, who runs finance firm Crescent Wealth, said acceptance of the LGBT community was a point of disagreement in the Muslim community.

In regards to whether Muslim clerics should be more accepting of homosexuality, Mr Yassine said imams had more important community issues to address, including mediating family issues.

Sheik Alsuleiman, founder of United Muslims Australia, has previously made comments about jihad and appeared at a Sydney rally for Syria in 2012 alongside Hizb ut-Tahrir spokesman Uthman Badar and Sheik Mustapha al-Majzoub.

In the 2013 sermon, he said: homosexuality was “responsible for “spreading all these diseases”. “If people commit the fahisha, the evil deed, the evil action, in the open and people do it in the public the Allah will send on them diseases ... diseases they have never experienced before,” he said.

Sheik Alsuleiman said if people committed extramarital sex in the open, “Allah will send on them diseases that they’ve never experienced before. And most of the diseases these days, if you speak to a doctor, he’ll tell you the most terrifying disease come from what? From sexual activities, where they, someone who is not clean sleeping with someone who is clean. Or also homosexuality that’s spreading all these diseases. “You know, let’s not deny the fact, don’t call it the name of freedom, you know, don’t talk about freedom. This is the freedom of action and we could do whatever we

want, it doesn't mean the freedom of action ... destroy a nation. These are evil actions, that bring upon evil outcomes to our society."

Additional reporting: Sam Buckingham-Jones, Leo Shanahan