

TV News Remains Suspicious about Muslims

C-1 World Dialogue and Media Tenor present Annual Dialogue Report 2009 in London

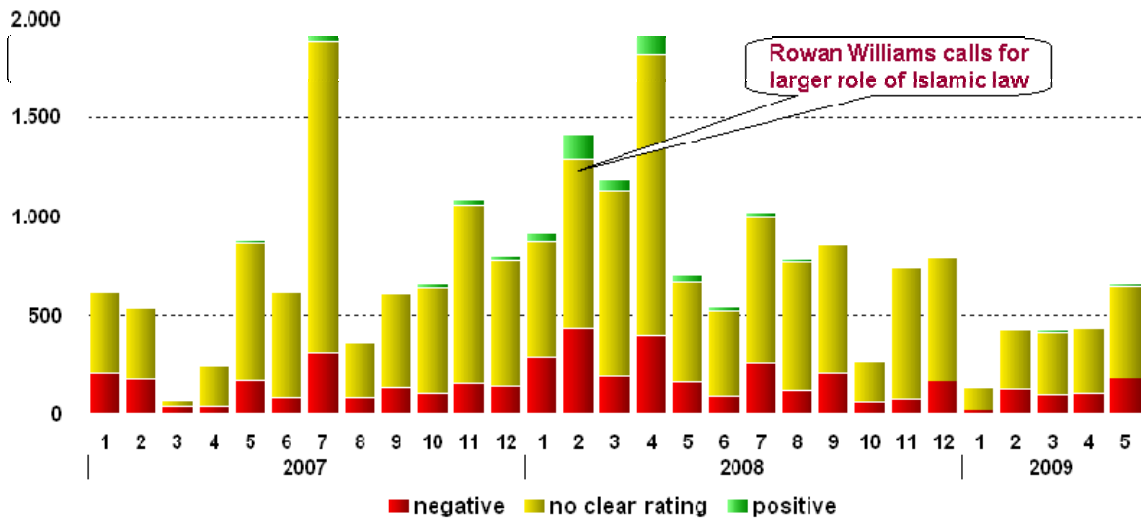
London, September 17th, 2009. The Annual Dialogue Report of the C-1 World Dialogue was released today in London. The C-1 initiative is co-chaired by the Bishop of London, the Right Rev. & Hon. Dr. Richard Chartres and His Excellency Dr. Ali Gomaa, the Grand Mufti of Egypt. To discuss the Report the Editors, Roland Schatz, President of Media Tenor, and Canon Alistair Macdonald-Radcliff, the Director General of the C-1, will be joined by Professor Anthony Grayling of London University who is on the C-1 Executive Committee.

In commending the Report, which is aimed to give an overview of the state of Muslim West Dialogue, Bishop Richard Chartres says that this Report “comes at a time of new impetus in relations with the Muslim world, stimulated by the recent historic speech in Cairo by President Obama. Such a time calls for new action but also for good evidence upon which to ground it.” And the data does show that positive change is indeed possible. For example, the percentage of people who support Bin Laden and Al Qaeda is falling in a number of Muslim countries.

Dr Gomaa the Grand Mufti of Egypt comments, “Establishing and maintaining peace is one of the most urgent issues of our time” and that “Action is clearly vital... but it must be based on knowledge if it is to be effective. It is important to explore and establish the factors that are shaping the course of Muslim-West relations, how opinions are changing over time and why.”

Yet there remains reason for concern as the media image “of the other side” stayed rather unfavourable in 2008/09. The analysis by Media Tenor shows, that especially television, which shapes the attitudes and views of a great portion of the public, emphasizes the negative aspects of religion in general and Islam in particular. While coverage of Muslims and Islam declined in British TV news declined notably in the second half of 2008, the tone remained very negative with a share of more than 20% of critical information broadcast in the first five months of 2009. While everyday life of Muslims and the peaceful co-existence of Christians and Muslims plays a minor role, the image of Islam remains dominated by war and terrorism, especially with regard to the increasing violence in Afghanistan. Positive news about Muslims are virtually absent from the main evening news in the UK.

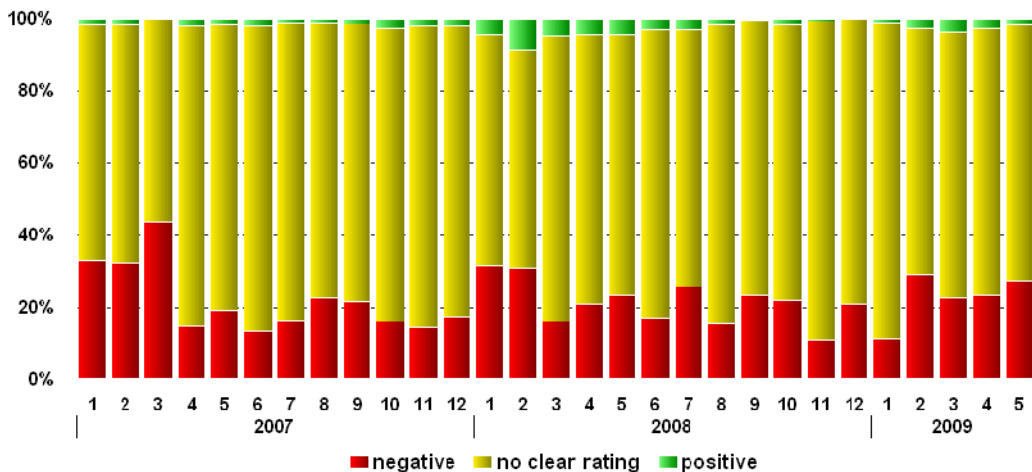
Chart 1: **Islam** in British TV news: Volume and tone, 01/2007-05/2009



Basis: 21,523 statements in 3 British TV news and BBC World News, 01/2007-05/2009

The data in report make it clear that dialogue is needed now more than ever but that in order to have real impact and credibility it must yield concrete projects and actions that have wide impact and can be communicated on a continuing basis not just when there is a particular crisis. The Cairo speech of President Obama illustrates this too as the data show it had a positive impact yet there is much demand to see real follow through and practical change. The C-1 initiative is working with such partners as the Tony Blair Faith Foundation to make sure that concrete steps are taken and that the message is communicated in a sustained way.

Chart 2: **Islam** in British TV news: Tone, 01/2007-05/2009



Basis: 21,523 statements in 3 British TV news and BBC World News, 01/2007-05/2009

Part of the work of the C-1 Foundation is to provide the data with which to assess progress and what works in terms of improving Muslim-West relations, in the words of Bishop Chartres: “There can be no doubt that the more facts and data we can gather upon

which to base future initiatives the more confident we can be of achieving the positive goal of a long term and sustainable improvement in Muslim-West relations that we need.”

In further support of these goals the report also explores the basis for common action that is provided by the Common Word initiative calling for cooperation on the basis of the two great shared commandments namely that we “Love God and our Neighbour”. There will be a major conference in association with the meeting of the Executive of the C-1 at Georgetown University in Washington DC from 7-9th October to plan future work that builds upon these principles and the data in this Report.

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Media Tenor analyzed the main evening news in the UK, the US, Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Switzerland and South Africa as well as Arabic satellite TV continuously with regard to the coverage of religions and values. For the UK, BBC and ITV news have been evaluated from January 2007 on. Overall 55,380 statements about religions, religious leaders and religious organizations have been analyzed.