Responses to the events of 11 September have been extraordinarily mixed, not so much confused. They have been further complicated by responses to 7 October and, after, with a newism that started. In Britain, the situation is particularly affected by the high proportion of Muslims with strong links to Pakistan and Pushtun origins, and in some cases directly to Afghanistan.

One of the first questions journalists have been asking has been regarding the numbers of Muslims in Britain today. This is a question no one will answer at the moment because we are expecting the results of the April 2001 Census – to be reported during the next twelve months – which included for the first time since 1861 a question on religion. We have to work with vague orders of magnitude. But it is obvious and well known that the public profile of British Islam is dominated by Muslims of South Asian origin, that it reflects the newspaper's well-known sense of where its readers' views are moving (whence its shift from Conservative to Labour in the 1997 elections). A Guardian poll in the public sector in the UK, which brings together leaders of all the faiths in the country, also issued a measured public statement.

However, much attention was attracted by a small group of mosques and organizations, mostly in London, which expressed support for the attacks and for Usama Bin Laden and the Taliban regime. The leader of Supporters of Sharia, Sheikh Abu Hamza al Masri, based at a mosque in Fenchley, declared the attackers to be martyrs and called on young Muslims to join the 'jihad'. Al-Muhajiroun, a splinter group from Hizb al-Tahrir, led by Sheikh Umar Bakers Muhammed, had led public demonstrations in several cities in support of the attacks. During October, they alleged that four young British Muslims had died fighting with the Taliban, and that more had travelled to Afghanistan in a programme organized by the Al-Muhajiroun. Relatives and friends of the young men denied the allegations.

These incidents served to illustrate the mixed reactions of the media to events since 11 September. The Al-Muhajiroun demonstrations were widely reported both in print and on radio and television stations. It was usually made clear that they represented only a small minority, but the picture material that accompanied reports often left a sense that the correction was of a magnitude. But it is obvious and well known that the public profile of British Islam is dominated by Muslims of South Asian origin, and in some cases directly to Afghanistan.

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Muslim organizations were quick and explicit in their condemnation of the New York and Washington attacks. The Muslim Council of Britain issued a very sharp statement already on 12 September, as did a number of local organizations and leaders as well as Muslim members of Parliament, Lords and Commons. Further statements appeared over the following weeks as events internation---

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