

Third of Feltham youth inmates Muslims



A third of inmates at one of the country's most youth jails are Muslims and the religion is attracting a large number of converts.

There are 229 Muslims out of a total of 686 youngsters detained at Feltham Young Offenders' Institution in West London, according to Ministry of Justice figures.

There are now so many worshippers at Friday prayers that they have to be split between Feltham's mosque and its gym.

Sources claim that converts are attracted by the chance of better food and a more comfortable regime.

But there are also fears that some are being radicalised.

During Ramadan, Muslim prisoners are given food in separate hot and cold containers so they can eat what they choose at the end of their daylight fast.

A source revealed: 'Over the last few years there has been a huge surge in those attending Muslim services.

"The popularity of the faith has surprised people. We are seeing a large number of inmates converting to Islam."

He added: "There is a difference between mainstream believers and extremists, but the fear is that some in the jail are being radicalised.

"Others convert for protection or to have what they believe is an easier lifestyle."

Prison insiders say most non-Muslims are locked up during Friday prayers because so many guards are needed to monitor the lunchtime service.

The Ministry of Justice said: "The Prison Service is committed to ensuring the religious needs of prisoners of all faiths are met."

Three guilty over homophobic leaflets

Three men from Derby were found guilty Monday of stirring up hatred on the grounds of sexual orientation after distributing a leaflet that said Islam called for anyone caught committing homosexuality to be executed.

Ihjaz Ali, Kabir Ahmed and Razwan Javed handed out the pamphlet, called 'The Death Penalty?', which showed an image of a mannequin hanging from a noose and quoted out-of-context Islamic texts that said capital punishment was the only way to rid society of homosexuality.

At Derby Crown Court they were convicted by a jury of distributing threatening written material intending to stir up hatred on the grounds of sexual orientation in the first prosecution of its kind since legislation came into force in March 2010.

Mehboob Hussain and Umar Javed, who were also charged with the same offence, were found not guilty by the jury. Judge John Burgess, Honorary Recorder of Derby, adjourned sentencing until February 10 for pre-sentence reports.

During their trial the jury of seven men and five women heard the men, who are all from Derby,



admitted distributing the leaflet, but said they were simply quoting and following what their religion teaches about homosexuality and did not intend to threaten anyone.

The leaflet was handed out outside and near the Jamia Mosque in Derby's Rosehill Street and in streets around the local neighbourhood in July 2010.

It was made and used as part of a campaign to publicise a protest

in response to the Gay Pride parade due to be held in Derby on July 10 that year.

Taxi driver Ali, of Fairfax Road, who the prosecution said was believed to be the main organiser and supplier of the leaflets, was found guilty of four counts of distribution on July 2 and July 4.

Ahmed, who is married with a nine-month-old daughter and lives in Madeley Street, and

Razwan Javed, of Wilfred Street, were convicted of distribution in the area of the mosque on July 2.

But married taxi driver Mehboob Hussain, of Rosehill Street, and Razwan's brother Umar Javed, a married takeaway worker who lives in Whittaker Street, were both cleared of distribution relating to posting the leaflets through the letterboxes of homes on July 4.

Ireland pushes to become first EU state to sell Islamic bond

Ireland plans to become the first European nation to sell sovereign sukuk - Islam-approved financial certificates - as its equal tax treatment for Islamic-finance products attracts investors.

The Government has agreements with more than 60 countries to avoid double taxation on Islamic transactions, Micheál Smith, the south-east Asia director of IDA Ireland, said.

Islamic finance assets around the world may rise about 16% to 1,240 billion this year, Raj Mohamad, managing director at Five Pillars, a consulting firm based in Singapore, told Bloomberg Television yesterday.

While plans to sell sukuk by Britain, France and Luxembourg have stalled, Mr Smith said Ireland will push ahead with a sale.

"Ireland will be going back to the bond market and a sukuk is an option when conditions are right. We also hope to form more working groups with Muslim countries such as Malaysia to build up a critical mass of expertise as the objective is for



Dublin to become a centre of excellence for Islamic finance."

Ireland introduced tax legislation for products that comply with Islam's ban on interest in 2010, Mr Smith, who is based in Singapore, said.

The Central Bank has a Shariah team overseeing its Islamic funds, which total about 390m under management.

The Irish Stock Exchange listed its first sukuk in 2005 and Ireland is a popular choice for sales because the nation offers a "relatively inexpensive" and timely listing process, he said.

The Government last sold bonds in September 2010, the year it had a deficit that was the highest as a percentage of gross

domestic product in the developed world.

The Department of Finance estimates the ratio dropped to 10.1% of GDP in 2011 from 31% the previous year. CIMB Group Holdings, the world's biggest sukuk arranger, said this week that it got approval to set up the first Shariah-compliant equity funds from Malaysia in Ireland.

Ireland's bid to become an Islamic finance hub received a boost in October when Goldman Sachs Group got approval from the nation's central bank to list its \$2bn (1.55bn) sukuk programme. The planned sale has attracted criticism among Islamic scholars, with some saying the proceeds may not be used

according to Shariah law. CIMB-Principal Islamic Asset Management, based in Kuala Lumpur, chose Ireland for its Islamic equity funds because there's no double taxation and no withholding tax on interest payments, Jim McCaughan, chief executive of US-based venture partner Principal Global Investors, said on Monday.

An initial investment of \$20m (15.5m) will be put into three funds that will open for subscription next month, he said.

"We expect interest from Europe, Malaysia and more importantly the Persian Gulf and other Muslim countries," Mr McCaughan said. "People are getting wealthier and want to diversify their funds."

Global sales of sukuk, which pay asset returns instead of interest, total 4.7bn this year, compared with 500m in the same period in 2011, according to data compiled by Bloomberg. Offerings reached a record \$36.3bn last year, surpassing the \$31bn raised in 2007.

The difference between the average yield for sukuk and the London interbank offered rate, or Libor, narrowed two basis points to 299 basis points yesterday, according to the HSBC/Nasdaq Dubai US Dollar Sukuk Index.