

Channel 4 history of Islam sparks flood of complaints and presenter Tom Holland subjected to torrent of abusive tweets



Controversy: Presenter Tom Holland

Channel 4 is at the centre of a storm over a programme it broadcast on the history of Islam.

Islam: The Untold Story has triggered nearly 550 complaints to both the television regulator Ofcom and Channel 4 itself.

It has also sparked a bitter war of words on Twitter involving leading historians and Islamic scholars.

Since it was screened last week, presenter Tom Holland, a historian with a double first from Cambridge, has been subjected to a torrent of abusive tweets, some of which have included physical threats.

He is accused of distorting the history of Islam by claiming the Koran makes little or no reference to the religious city of Mecca.

One Twitter user accused Mr Holland of trying to destroy Islamic history while another called him a 'fool' for suggesting Islam is a 'made-up religion'.

The Islamic Education and Research Academy has published a lengthy paper denouncing the programme. But historians have rallied to Mr Holland's defence.

Dan Snow, who has presented history shows for the BBC with his father Peter, described the programme as 'a triumph', tweeting: 'Dear angry, mad people – it is conceivable that you know more than the world's leading scholars, but very unlikely.'

The Academy claims the programme's assertion that there are no historical records detailing the life and teachings of the Prophet Muhammad is flawed.



Fury: The programme *Islam: The Untold Story*, presented by historian Tom Holland, pictured, sparked a backlash on Twitter 'Holland appears to have turned a blind eye to rich Islamic historical tradition,' says the Academy. Ofcom, which has received 150 complaints about the programme's alleged bias, inaccuracy and offence caused to Muslims, is considering an investigation.

The BBC's new sitcom *Citizen Khan*, which confronts the issues faced by a modern Muslim family, is also being considered for investigation after receiving just 20 complaints.

Last night Mr Holland said: 'The origins of Islam are a legitimate subject of historical inquiry and this film is wholly in keeping with other series and programmes on Channel 4.'

'We were of course aware that we were touching deeply-held sensitivities and went to every effort to ensure that the moral and civilisational power of Islam was acknowledged.'

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MCB's Secretary General writes to Channel 4 Chairman and Chief Executive on 'Islam: the Untold Story'

Farooq Murad, the Secretary General of the Muslim Council, has written to the Chairman of Channel 4, Lord Burns and Chief Executive of Channel 4, Mr David Abraham, registering the Muslim community's strong disapproval of the programme.

[Letter to Lord Burns, Chairman, Channel 4](#)

[Letter to Mr David Abraham, Chief Executive, Channel 4](#)