

IPCS **SPECIAL** **REPORT**

No. 2, September 2005

Al Muhajiroun

David Smith

INSTITUTE OF PEACE AND CONFLICT STUDIES

B 7/3 Safdarjung Enclave, New Delhi 110029, INDIA
Tel: 91-1151652556-9; Fax: 91-11-51652560
Email: officemail@ipcs.org; Web: www.ipcs.org

AL-MUHAJIROUN

David Smith, Research Intern, IPCS

Al Muhajiroun is a radical Islamic fifth column organisation formed in England on 16 February 1996 by Syrian born Omar Bakri Mohammed after splitting with Hizb ut-Tahrir (HuT – the Islamic Liberation Party) another extremist Islamic group also founded by Bakri. Al-Muhajiroun's political agenda differs from British HuT branch as it supports and condones violence to promote its Islamic based ideology. A fringe radical Muslim group based in Britain, while heavily criticised and condemned by Muslim Council of Britain, the largest UK Islamic organization.

Sheikh Omar Bakri Muhammad is the self-proclaimed spiritual leader with a long history of terrorist activities from Lebanon to Saudi Arabia before claiming British asylum in 1986. Believed to be in association with bin Laden and Al-Qaeda His outspoken views praising the suicide bombers involved in 9/11 and 7/7 terrorist attacks as 'Magnificent 19' and



Sheikh Omar Bakri Muhammad

the 'fantastic four' respectively. The media has contrived Bakri as a hate figure and scapegoat for London bombings through his extreme and violent philosophy. After the London July 2005 bombings Bakri was considered for trial on treason charges. However he fled to Lebanon on 6 August then subsequently arrested in Beirut and barred from returning to Britain after

introduction of new terrorism laws implemented after 7/7 London bombings.¹

Organisations membership in the low hundreds recruiting mainly young Muslim men, from unemployed to professional's classes. Al-Muhajiroun encourages its members to live on state benefit and not contribute to British society financially. Bakri's weekly meetings preach violence on topics such as "The virtue of the self sacrifice operation." They aim to justify the employment of suicide terrorism for attacking political targets such as 10 Downing Street.²

The Ideology follows a radical interpretation of Islam based upon the revitalisation of an Ottoman Empire type caliphate, while expanding this vision to the whole world united under Shariah (Islamic law). Members are openly homophobic, anti-Jewish/Israel, hostile to many non-Islamic cultures and against universal suffrage. The group idolize Osama Bin Laden are pro-Al-Qaeda and claim to financially support Hamas, Egyptian Jihad, Hizbollah and Taliban. Hostile to UK government and have often threatened violence as a means to achieving political aims.³

Links between suspected or accused terrorists and Al-Muhajiroun – Finsbury Park Mosque are extensive, with many involved in many high profile terrorist activities. The radical cleric Abu Hamza al-Masri, a preacher in the Mosque is also wanted on terrorism charges in Yemen and

¹ 'Profile: Omar Bakri Muhammad' news.bbc.co.uk 21 July 2005

² 'Al-Muhajiroun,' news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/newsnight, 29 April, 2004

³ www.homelandsecurity.com

fought with the Mujahideen in Afghanistan against Soviets. They include Djamel Beghal accused of plotting attacks in



Finsbury Park Mosque in London

France and Feroz Abbasi a Britain held in Guantanamo bay.⁴ Richard Reid 'shoe bomber,' Germaine Lindsay (London Subway bomber), Zacarias Moussaoui '20th bomber' 9/11 and James Ujaama whom in 1999 attempted to set up Al-Qaeda militant training camp in Oregon, US. Also Omar Khan Sharif and Asif Mohammed the two British suicide bombers responsible for Mikes Bar in Israel in 2003 are believed to have attended the Mosque.⁵

London's Finsbury Park Mosque has been main venue for Al-Muhajiroun conferences. The most controversial, marking the first 9/11 anniversary discussed the 'positive outcomes.' of Twin Tower attacks. The group also proclaimed Osama bin Laden a



Outside conference held at Finsbury Park Mosque

⁴ 'Mosque in the spotlight' news.bbc.co.uk, 23 January, 2002.

⁵ www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/1445361/posts

'hero' and warned that Britain was endanger of 'suicide bombings everywhere.' These types of events attract hostile opposition from far-right groups such as BNP, national Front and also communist factions.⁶

Al-Muhajiroun also setup rallies some of which taking placed even though banded such as Trafalgar square which only attracted a few dozen members.⁷ Others at Downing Street, the Israeli embassy in October 2000 and a Derby rally in support of 'brothers in Palestinian aggressive both verbally and physically.⁸ Al-Muhajiroun call death threats world leaders such as Prime Minister Tony Blair



Sheikh Abu Hamza speaking at rally

former PM John Major, ex- Russia President Boris Yeltsin and Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf.⁹

While a previous overseas office Hassan Butt branch in Lahore Pakistan assistance Britons wishing to join and fight with Taliban in Afghanistan where three were killed in October 2001.¹⁰

⁶ Hard liners call Bin Laden 'hero,' news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/england/2252361.stm 12 September 2002

⁷ 'Dozens attend radical Muslim rally,' news.bbc.co.uk, 25 August, 2002

⁸ 'Bombing claims a surprise to Derby,' news.bbc.co.uk, 1 may 2003

⁹ 'Police investigate Blair 'death threat'' news.bbc.co.uk, 10 October 2001

¹⁰ 'UK Muslims 'killed' in Afghanistan news.bbc.co.uk 29 October, 2001

Al-Muhajiroun websites displayed their messages however these have been closed down presumably by British government although HuT website is currently operational. Long term leaflet and poster campaigns distributed in streets and university campuses which are primarily anti-Jewish, promote inter Semitic violence "the final hour will not come until Muslims fight the Jews and kill them."¹¹ One protested outside London Jewish community conference on Israeli Independence Day chanting racist slogans. While Bakri openly denies the holocaust and the group have publicly burnt the Israeli and Union Jack flags. They highly opposed to the 2003 British military invasion of Iraq as Amer Mirza a member through a petrol bombed at a London army base in protest.¹² While opposition to British democracy and 'man-made laws' inspired violent protest against George Galloway's anti-war Respect party during 2005 general election¹³ Scotland Yard Anti- terrorism police raided London headquarters, and top leaders homes in July 2003 to find evidence of link with terrorist activities.¹⁴ Al -Muhajiroun was formally disbanded on 13 October 2004, however successors The Saviour Sect. and Abu Ghurabaa continue their political work.¹⁵ British Prime Minister reacting to London bombers banned Al-Muhajiroun on August 5 2005 as part of a 12-point plan designed to curb additional terrorist attacks.¹⁶ With Bakri's exile Anjem Choudary, spokesman and leader will fill

the void and work may continue abet under tight surveillance by British intelligence.

(All photos courtesy of BBC online)

¹¹ 'Muslim guilty of stirring anti-Semitic hate', Jewish Chronicle, 19 April 2002

¹² www.ict.org.il/articles/articledet.cfm?articleid=484

¹³ 'Radical cleric leaves, but his legacy remains,' www.guardian.co.uk, 10 August 2005

¹⁴ 'Police raid Islamic group' news.bbc.co.uk 30 July 2003

¹⁵ www.answers.com/topic/al-muhajiroun

¹⁶ Blair announces plans to deport extremists,' politics.guardian.co.uk, 5 August 2005