

= Anjem Choudary =

Anjem Choudary (Urdu : ????? ?????? ; born 1967) is a British Muslim social and political activist . He was previously a solicitor and served as the chairman of the Society of Muslim Lawyers , and , until it was proscribed , the spokesman for Islam4UK .

With Omar Bakri Muhammad , he helped form an Islamist organisation , al @-@ Muhajiroun . The group organised several anti @-@ Western demonstrations , including a banned protest march in London for which Choudary was summonsed to appear in court . The UK government banned Al @-@ Muhajiroun and Choudary was present at the launch of its intended successor , Ahlus Sunnah wal Jamaah . He later helped form Al Ghurabaa , which was also banned . Choudary then became the spokesman for Islam4UK . He receives little support from mainstream UK Muslims and has been largely criticised in the country 's media .

A critic of the UK 's involvement in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan , Choudary praised those responsible for the 11 September 2001 and 7 July 2005 attacks . He supports the implementation of Sharia law throughout the UK and marched in protest at the Jyllands @-@ Posten cartoons controversy , following which he was prosecuted for organising an unlawful demonstration . He was investigated , but not charged , for his comments in 2006 regarding Pope Benedict XVI . Choudary is currently on trial for allegedly inviting support of a proscribed organisation , namely the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant .

= = Early life = =

Born in the UK on 18 January 1967 , Anjem Choudary is the son of a Welling market trader and is of Pakistani descent . He attended Mulgrave Primary School , in Woolwich . He enrolled as a medical student at the University of Southampton , where he was known as Andy , but failed his first @-@ year exams . Responding to claims that he was a " party animal " who joined his friends in " getting stoned " , in 2014 Choudary commented " I admit that I wasn 't always practising ... I committed many mistakes in my life . " He switched to law and spent his final year as a legal student (1990 ? 1991) at Guildford , before moving to London to teach English as a second language . He found work at a legal firm and completed his legal qualifications to become a lawyer . Choudary became the chairman of the Society of Muslim Lawyers , but was removed from the roll of solicitors (the official register of legal practitioners) in 2002 .

Choudary first came to public attention in 1999 , when The Sunday Telegraph identified him as having been involved in the recruitment of Muslim trainees leaving Britain to fight abroad . He told the newspaper " before they go abroad to fight for organisations like the IIF , the volunteers are trained in Britain . Some of the training does involve guns and live ammunition . "

= = Organisations = =

= = = Al @-@ Muhajiroun = = =

Choudary embraced Islamism and , with the Islamist militant leader Omar Bakri Muhammed , co @-@ founded al @-@ Muhajiroun a Salafi Wahabi organization . The two men had met at a local mosque , where Bakri was giving a tafsir (an interpretation of the Qur 'an) . In 2002 , following a bazaar organised by al @-@ Muhajiroun (advertised by leaflet and word of mouth) , Choudary gave a talk on education at Slough . His lecture outlined his ideas for a parallel system of Islamic education in the UK and included elements of the group 's ideology . In the same year , although they were refused a permit by the then Mayor of London Ken Livingstone , on 25 August the group held a rally in London . Choudary was summonsed to Bow Street Magistrates ' Court in January 2003 , on charges which included " exhibiting a notice , advertisement or any other written or pictorial matter " , " using apparatus for the amplification of sound " , " making a public speech or address " and " organising an assembly " .

In 2003 or 2004 he organised an Islamic @-@ themed camping trip , at which Bakri lectured , on the 54 @-@ acre (220 @,@ 000 m2) grounds of the Jameah Islamiyah School in East Sussex . Advertised by word @-@ of @-@ mouth , the trip was attended by 50 Muslim men , most of whom were members of al @-@ Muhajiroun . Bakri later claimed the camp 's activities included lectures on Islam , football and paintballing . In September 2006 , following allegations that it was used in the training and recruitment of terrorists , police searched the school . According to testimony from Al Qaeda suspects held at the Guantanamo Bay detainment camp , in 1997 and 1998 Abu Hamza and groups of around 30 of his followers held training camps at the school , which included training with AK47 rifles and handguns , and a mock rocket launcher . No arrests were made , and students and faculty were allowed to return on 23 September 2006 , the first day of Ramadan .

The UK government had investigated expelling Bakri even before the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 , and in July 2003 the headquarters of al @-@ Muhajiroun , and the homes of Bakri and Choudary , were raided by the police . The following year , under new anti @-@ terrorist legislation , the government announced that it wanted to ban al @-@ Muhajiroun . In 2005 Bakri learned that he was at risk of prosecution for his support of the 7 July 2005 London bombers , and in August left the UK for Lebanon , where he claimed that he was on holiday . After leaving a television station where he said " I will not return to Britain unless I want to go there as a visitor or as a tourist " , he was detained by Lebanon 's general security department and held in a Beirut prison . Several days later , Bakri was excluded from returning to Britain by the Home Secretary , Charles Clarke , on the grounds that his presence in Britain was " not conducive to the public good . " Choudary condemned the decision and demanded to know what Bakri had done to justify the ban . He claimed that ministers were inventing rules to ensure that Bakri could not return . In November Choudary and three other followers of Bakri were deported from Lebanon , and returned to the UK . Choudary blamed the Foreign and Commonwealth Office for orchestrating their deportations , claiming that the four were there to help Bakri set up a madrasah .

Following his deportation , Choudary attended the launch in London of Ahlus Sunnah wal Jamaah , the intended successor organisation to al @-@ Muhajiroun . Choudary said that Bakri was not on the committee of the new group , but that " we would love for the sheikh to have a role . " The organisation operates mainly through an invitation @-@ only internet forum , to which Choudary contributes under the screen name Abou Luqman . A reporter visiting the site found calls for holy war , and recordings by Osama Bin Laden , Ayman al @-@ Zawahiri , and Omar Bakri Mohammed .

Al @-@ Muhajiroun attempted a relaunch in June 2009 at Conway Hall , in Holborn . Several speakers were invited to share a platform with Choudary , but some later claimed that they had been invited under false pretences . When the group refused to allow women into the meeting , the chairman of the society which runs the hall cancelled the event . He was heckled by many of those in the audience . Choudary took the microphone from the chairman and led chants of " sharia for UK " , saying in reference to the exclusion of women : " Jews and Christians will never make peace with you until you either become like them or adopt their ways . " Outside the hall , Choudary criticised British society , and predicted that Muslims would make up the majority within one or two decades . When asked why , if society was so bad , he lived here , he replied : " We come here to civilise people , get them to come out of the darkness and injustice into the beauty of Islam . "

= = = Al Ghurabaa = = =

Choudary was also a spokesman for Al Ghurabaa , believed to have been an offshoot of al @-@ Muhajiroun . It was proscribed in 2006 by the then Home Secretary John Reid . Choudary was outraged : " The easy option when one is losing an argument is to ban the opposition voice We [al @-@ Ghurabaa] are not a military organisation ; we have only been vociferous in our views ? views concerning everything from the government 's foreign policy in Iraq and Afghanistan to the host of draconian laws , which they ? ve introduced against us in this country . "

= = = Islam4UK = = =

In November 2008 , Choudary organised a meeting of the then recently formed Islam4UK , which , according to its website , was " established by sincere Muslims as a platform to propagate the supreme Islamic ideology within the United Kingdom as a divine alternative to man @-@ made law " , and to " convince the British public about the superiority of Islam ... thereby changing public opinion in favour of Islam in order to transfer the authority and power ... to the Muslims in order to implement the Sharee ? ah (here in Britain) " . According to Ed Husain , co @-@ founder of the counter @-@ terrorism think @-@ tank the Quilliam Foundation , Islam4UK was a " splinter group of al @-@ Muhajiroun and Hizb ut @-@ Tahrir , the originators of extremism in Britain . " The meeting , advertised as a conference to " rise to defend the honour of the Muslims " , was held at the Brady Arts and Community Centre in Tower Hamlets . Choudary then announced that Bakri would be speaking , via a video @-@ conference link , although technical problems meant that his address was instead given over a telephone line . When asked by a Muslim woman how the comments of one of the event 's speakers could be justified , with regards to Islam being a religion of peace , Choudary stated , " Islam is not a religion of peace ... It is a religion of submission . We need to submit to the will of Allah . "

With the announcement by Islam4UK that it planned to hold a protest march through Wootton Bassett (known for the military funeral repatriations of dead British soldiers returning from the war in Afghanistan) , Choudary said " You may see one or two coffins being returned to the UK every other day , but when you think about the people of Afghanistan its a huge number [being killed] in comparison [...] I intend to write a letter to the parents of British soldiers telling them the reality of what they died for . " Choudary 's open letter was published on 3 January 2010 . It explained his reasons for proposing the march , endorsed his religious beliefs , and claimed that UK politicians had been lying about the war . Choudary wrote that the proposed march was to " engage the British public 's minds on the real reasons why their soldiers are returning home in body bags and the real cost of the war . " In an interview with Sky News , he stated that the location was chosen to effect a level of media attention which " it would not have gained anywhere else " . The proposal was condemned by the British Prime Minister , Gordon Brown , who said that to offend the families of dead or wounded troops would be " completely inappropriate " . The Minhaj @-@ ul @-@ Quran International UK centre in Forest Gate also condemned the proposal , as did the Muslim Council of Britain , which stated that it " condemns the call by the fringe extremist group Islam4UK for their proposed march in Wootton Bassett . " The planned march was cancelled by the group , on 10 January 2010 .

From 14 January 2010 , Islam4UK was proscribed under the Terrorism Act 2000 , making membership illegal and punishable by imprisonment . Choudary condemned the order . In an interview on BBC Radio he said " we are now being targeted as an extremist or terrorist organisation and even banned for merely expressing that " and " I feel this is a failure of the concept of democracy and freedom . " Following his arrest and subsequent release in September 2014 on suspicion of encouraging terrorism , Choudary claimed he was questioned about his membership of or support for proscribed groups including Islam4UK and Need4Khalifah , both of which the government believes are successors to al @-@ Muhajiroun .

= = Views = =

Choudary referred to the 11 September 2001 terrorists as " magnificent martyrs " . In 2003 he said that al @-@ Muhajiroun would " encourage people to fulfil their Islamic duties and responsibilities " , although he also said that the group was a political movement and not responsible for individual actions . In 2004 he said that a terror attack on British soil was " a matter of time " . He refused to condemn the 7 July 2005 London bombings , but accused the Muslim Council of Britain (who had) of " selling their souls to the devil " . He blamed the 2013 murder of Lee Rigby , an off @-@ duty British soldier , on British foreign policy .

Choudary has voiced support for the Muslim community in Somalia , who , he claims , have been " violated " by Christian @-@ backed Ethiopians , and has also called for other members to fight jihad

The Wall Street Journal describes Choudary as a supporter of " the fundamentalist strain of Islamic teaching known as Salafism " . He believes in the primacy of Islam over all other faiths , and the implementation of Sharia Law , in its entirety , in the UK . In 2001 he stated that his allegiance is to Islam , and not a country . He believes that , for a true Muslim , " a British passport is no more than a travel document . " In October 2006 he addressed an audience at Trinity College , Dublin to oppose the motion that " This house believes that Islamist violence can never be justified " . In February 2008 the Archbishop of Canterbury , Rowan Williams , commented that " as a matter of fact certain provisions of sharia are already recognised in our society and under our law " . Choudary responded by saying that Sharia " has to be adopted wholesale " , and that " it will come either by embracing Islam because it is the fastest growing religion in the country , or by an Islamic country conquering Britain or by elements embracing Islam and imposing it . "

In 2008 he spoke of the " flag of Sharia " flying over Downing Street by 2020 , claimed that some Muslim families in east London were having " 10 or 12 children each " , and that hundreds were converting to Islam each day . Choudary has spoken against elements of the Christian faith . In December 2008 he posted a sermon on an Islamic website , in which he stated : " Every Muslim has a responsibility to protect his family from the misguidance of Christmas , because its observance will lead to hellfire . Protect your Paradise from being taken away ? protect yourself and your family from Christmas " .

In an interview with Iran 's Press TV (which was subsequently posted online on 11 April 2013) , Choudary stated " As Muslims , we reject democracy , we reject secularism , and freedom , and human rights . We reject all of the things that you espouse as being ideals ... There is nothing called a republic in Islam . When we talk about the shari 'a , we are talking about only the shari 'a . We are talking about rejecting the U.N. , the IMF , and the World Bank . "

In 2013 the British pressure group Hope not Hate presented a report which identified Choudary as " a serious player on the international Islamist scene " , saying that although there was no evidence that he was directly responsible for instigating any terrorist plots , " he helped shape the mindset of many of those behind them " and " through his networks linked them up to terror groups and supporters across the world . " Choudary dismissed the claims as " fanciful " , that if they were true , UK security services would have arrested him .

In September 2014 , Choudary described Abu Bakr al @-@ Baghdadi , leader of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant , as " the caliph of all Muslims and the prince of the believers " .

On 5 August 2015 , Choudary was charged with one offence under section 12 of the Terrorism Act 2000 for inviting support of a proscribed organisation , namely Islamic State , between June 2014 and March 2015 . An expected trial date until 7 March 2016 has been given . His trial was postponed to 27 June 2016 , and is expected to last no more than four weeks .

= = Activism = =

Choudary has regularly attended public marches and , following a protest march outside the Danish Embassy in London on 3 February 2006 , held in response to the Jyllands @-@ Posten Muhammad cartoons controversy , he was a member of a panel of interviewees on the BBC news programme Newsnight . He defended Muslims in Britain , saying that " we live in peace with the host community , we are not allowed to target people here " , and claimed that the police had inspected and allowed the controversial placards used in the demonstration . Choudary was criticised by his fellow panellists , who included Ann Cryer , then MP for Keighley , Humera Khan , of the al @-@ Nisa Muslim Women 's Group (who accused him of demonising Islam) , Sayeeda Warsi , the vice @-@ chair of the Conservative Party , Professor Tariq Ramadan (who claimed that Choudary 's actions were designed to evoke a strong response from the media) , and Roger Knapman , the leader of the UK Independence Party . On 15 March 2006 he was among five men arrested in connection with the demonstration , which had been organised by al Ghurabaa . He was arrested again on 4 May at Stansted Airport for an alleged breach of bail , and charged with organising the protest without notifying police . He was bailed to appear before Bow Street Magistrates Court on 11 May .

On 4 July 2006 he was convicted and fined £ 500 with £ 300 court costs .

The following day , at an Al Ghurabaa press conference at the Al Badr centre in Leyton , Choudary claimed that the blame for the London bombings lay with the British government , and said that the then Prime Minister , Tony Blair , had " blood on his hands " . He also urged Muslims to defend themselves against perceived attacks by " whatever means they have at their disposal " , and referred to the 2 June 2006 Forest Gate raid in which Mohammed Abdul Kahar was shot in the shoulder . He encouraged Muslims not to co - operate with the police under any circumstances . Local council leader Clyde Loakes criticised Choudary 's comments , stating " I am sure the vast majority of Waltham Forest residents do not support these views . " Several days later , on 9 June 2006 , Choudary organised a demonstration outside the Forest Gate police station in London , to protest against the arrest of the two Forest Gate men . The men 's families said that an extremist protest would " only give another opportunity for our community to be portrayed in a negative light " and sent a statement to more than twenty mosques (read to worshippers during prayers) urging them to disassociate themselves from the event . About 35 men and 15 women attended the demonstration .

In September 2006 Pope Benedict XVI gave a speech on the question of the " reasonableness " of the Christian faith , to the University of Regensburg in Germany . In the Regensburg lecture he spoke about rationality in faith , and cited comments by the fourteenth century Byzantine emperor Manuel II Palaiologos , who , as the Pope put it , said " show me just what Mohamed brought that was new , and there you will find things only evil and inhuman , such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached . " The citation attracted severe criticism from Muslims around the world , including the parliament of Pakistan which condemned the Pope for his comments , and which sought an apology from him . Following the speech , on 17 September Choudary led a protest outside Westminster Cathedral , where he told reporters " Whoever insults the message of Mohammed is going to be subject to capital punishment . " The Daily Mail reported him as saying : " I am here [to] have a peaceful demonstration , but there may be people in Italy and other parts that would carry that out . " The Metropolitan Police investigated his comments , but concluded that " no substantive offences " were committed during the demonstration . The Shadow Home Secretary , David Davis , who had called for action to be taken against Choudary , said : " It is quite disgraceful . It sends out a message to Muslim extremists that we , as a country , do not have the moral courage to stand up to them . "

He attempted to enter France to demonstrate against the French government 's decision to ban the burka , but was stopped at the port of Calais . His passport was seized and he was issued documents banning him from France indefinitely .

On 13 December 2013 Choudary led a march in Brick Lane , organised by the east London @ - @ based Sharia Project , demanding a ban on alcohol being sold by Muslim establishments . An East London Mosque official , speaking of the patrols , identified The Shariah Project as " strongly linked " to Anjem Choudary 's banned group Al @ - @ Muhajiroun . Abu Rumaysah of The Shariah Project had predicted " hundreds " would join the demonstration , claiming that groups of Muslims would come from as far away as the Midlands to take part . In the event , only a few dozen protesters took part in the march . Choudary afterwards explained its purpose : ? What we did is we posted a notice to the shop owners saying that under Sharia and under the Koran the sale of alcohol is prohibited and if one were to also drink alcohol , that would be 40 lashes . We were there to teach them that just because they are living among non @ - @ Muslims is no excuse because Sharia law will be implemented in Britain , and so they should be aware that just because it is not Sharia today , they can ? t just do whatever they like . ? Choudary said that the Shariah Project group would be arranging many more such rallies .

= = Public reception = =

Choudary has been largely criticised by most UK newspapers , some of whom describe him as an extremist , or radical cleric or preacher . In January 2010 , Guardian contributor Mehdi Hasan wrote : " Is Choudary an Islamic scholar whose views merit attention or consideration ? No . Has he studied

under leading Islamic scholars ? Nope . Does he have any Islamic qualifications or credentials ? None whatsoever . So what gives him the right to pontificate on Islam , British Muslims or ' the hellfire ' ? Or proclaim himself a ' sharia judge ' ? " , and claimed that Choudary was " as unrepresentative of British Muslim opinion , as he is of British anti @-@ war opinion . "

The Conservative Party leader David Cameron said that Choudary " is one of those people who needs to be looked at seriously in terms of the legality of what he 's saying because he strays , I think , extremely close to the line of encouraging hatred , extremism and violence . "

Salma Yaqoob , then leader of the Respect Party , said in 2010 of Choudary : " He is a bigot whose goal in life is to provoke division . He engages in these provocations because he is deeply hostile to any coming together of Muslims and non @-@ Muslims . For him , the fact that a majority of the British people ? Muslim and non @-@ Muslim ? oppose the war in Afghanistan is not something to be celebrated , but is something to be feared . " Rod Liddle , writing in The Spectator , said : " Anjem Choudray ... is one of those thick @-@ as @-@ mince gobby little chancers who could only possibly come from Britain . " Conservatives in the United States have also been critical of Choudary . Fox News host Sean Hannity called Choudary " one sick , miserable , evil S.O.B. " during a segment on his show discussing the 2011 Egyptian protests .

Choudary has received little support from the mainstream Muslim community . However , in January 2010 Jamie Bartlett , a writer for the Telegraph , speculated that he might have " some " support among the minority of Muslims in the UK who could be considered to hold conservative views . The following year , Peter Osborne , defending Baroness Warsi 's criticism of how British Muslims have been treated , singled out Choudary as an exception to the majority that were " decent people " .

Tabloid criticism of Islam4UK and Choudary since news of the proposed march first became public has , generally , been vitriolic , calling him a " hate preacher " . In January 2010 , appearing on the BBC 's The Daily Politics , he was asked by its presenter , Andrew Neil , for his opinions on the banning of Islam4UK , before being asked to comment on his financial status , claiming that it was " relevant to our viewers " . Choudary told Neil that his finances were a personal matter , and that he was " doing something , and I don 't want to discuss that with you . I 'm not on Jobseeker 's allowance , but at the same time I have family allowance , I have very firmly held views which I 'm propagating at the same time . " Responding to the media 's criticism of him , Choudary said " I do believe that people have been whipped up into an anti @-@ Islam anti @-@ Muslim frenzy . "

= = Personal life = =

In 1996 , Choudary married Rubana Akhtar , or Akhgar , who was then 22 years old and had recently joined al @-@ Muhajiroun , which he led at the time . She later became the group 's head of women . The couple have four children .