



Denial in Britain

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In the wake of the two bomb-rigged cars discovered in London and the flaming jeep that crashed into a Glasgow airport terminal, the terror threat level in Britain has been [raised to critical](#). British authorities are continuing to search for suspects, and haven't ruled out the possibility that more catastrophic attacks are being planned, and could be imminent. Authorities have noted similarities between these events and past jihad terror plots, are [investigating a possible link](#) between one of the would-be car bombers and Islamic jihad terrorist Dhiren Barot, who is serving a life sentence for an Al-Qaeda-backed plot to bomb the World Bank, New York Stock Exchange, and headquarters of the International Monetary Fund, among other targets.

As has become the pattern in such cases, authorities brushed aside and declined to consider the implications of evidence that the events in London and Glasgow were motivated by the ideology of Islamic jihad. Daud Abdullah, the Deputy Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB), suggested that the religion of the attackers was incidental to their actions when he [said](#): "Let's not create a hypothetical problem...it can be the work of Muslims, Christians, Jews or Buddhists." The new British Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, appeared to agree, saying that new efforts had to be undertaken to [win the "hearts and minds"](#) of Muslims. "We have got to separate," he added, "those great moderate members of our community from a few extremists who wish to practice violence and inflict maximum loss of life in the

interests of a perversion of their religion.” The new First Minister of Scotland, Alex Salmond, [assured Muslims](#) in Scotland that no community would be “scapegoated” in the wake of the Glasgow Airport attack. “In Scotland,” he maintained, “the Muslim community is part of the fabric of society, and is hugely important for social life, and this community link will remain strong.” London Mayor Ken Livingstone went even farther, [asserting](#): “In this city, Muslims are more likely to be law-abiding than non-Muslims and less likely to support the use of violence to achieve political ends than non-Muslims.”

These words were no doubt reassuring to Mohammad Sarwar, a Glasgow politician and a member of Parliament until he stepped down in late June after receiving death threats from Muslims over his aid with the prosecution of a group of Muslim murderers. Despite this unpleasantly close encounter with Islamic extremism, Sarwar seemed more concerned about actions by non-Muslims against Muslims. Announcing that Muslim leaders in Scotland were coming together at a hastily-convened meeting in Glasgow, [he explained](#): “They’re concerned about a backlash and that’s why the emergency meeting has been called.”

Osama Saeed of the Muslim Association of Britain, meanwhile, expressed exasperation at the fact that non-Muslims expected Muslims to be active in opposing terror activities within the Islamic community: “We are seething with anger about

this,” he said – that is, about the idea that jihad plots should be seen as a challenge to the larger Islamic community to do more against terrorism, not about the jihad plots themselves. “As a community,” [he said](#), “not only are we just as likely to be victims as anyone else, but we are also looked to in order to provide direction and in some respects take responsibility for this. We are sick of being defined as a community by terrorism and having to answer for it.”

Saeed’s anger was ironic in light of the haste with which Brown, Livingstone, and Salmond drew distinctions between the Muslim community in Britain and those who were behind the London and Glasgow jihad plots. As the plots continued to be investigated over the weekend, no British officials were saying anything at all about the need for Muslims in Britain to redouble their efforts to teach against the jihad ideology of Islamic supremacy, to formulate new understandings of the Qur’an and Sunnah, rejecting the literal and mainstream legal interpretations of a large number of passages, to renounce any intention to impose Sharia in Britain at any time in the future, and to work much more closely with British authorities in order to root out jihadists from their ranks. In Britain, only the ex-jihadist Hassan Butt, who now calls himself a moderate Muslim, [spoke more realistically](#) about what needs to be done: “It isn’t enough for Muslims to say that because they feel at home in Britain they can simply ignore those passages of the Koran which

instruct on killing unbelievers. By refusing to challenge centuries-old theological arguments, the tensions between Islamic theology and the modern world grow larger every day.”

The official silence about the Islamic element of the attacks was all the more curious in light of the revelation that British authorities were deeply concerned by the fact that the London and Glasgow plotters had no clear or readily discernable ties to terror groups: they were “[off the radar](#).” One remarked: “If there is no trace then this means the terrorism situation in the UK is much worse than we have believed.” Indeed it is, because no Muslim group in the United Kingdom or elsewhere has drawn a distinction between themselves and the jihadists that is sufficiently sharp to prevent those jihadists from moving freely among the peaceful Muslims. They have not expelled jihadists from mosques, and they have not instituted comprehensive, compulsory programs to teach against the jihad ideology.

And since the threat is not being challenged at the ideological level, it is entirely possible for a peaceful Muslim to turn into a jihadist under the noses of authorities -- as Mike Hawash and others have done in the U.S.

The problem is, therefore, much bigger than British authorities think, and much bigger than they are even now willing to admit. Until they are willing to face the fact that attackers such as those we have seen in Britain over the last few days *couldn't* just as well have been Buddhists, but rather arise from the Islamic community and base their actions upon Islamic principles, they will not be dealing with the root of this problem realistically, and we are going to see many more attacks. “I believe,” said Butt, “that the issue of terrorism can be easily demystified if Muslims and non-Muslims start openly to discuss the ideas that fuel terrorism.” Do Brown, Livingstone, Salmond and the rest have the courage to do this?

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