



A PRACTICAL, SOURCED GUIDE

FIGHTING ISLAMISTS 101

THEY WANT TO CONQUER THE WORLD

Islamists want to make the whole world Islamic. This book shows what they believe, how they work, and how we stop them.

THE ANALYST

A SHORT, SOURCED GUIDE

Fighting Islamists 101

THEY WANT TO CONQUER THE WORLD

*Who the Islamists are, what they believe, and how free societies
can stop them*

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Why this book

Islamism is the most lethal extremist ideology of our time. Most people cannot say what it is, where it comes from, or what it wants.

MI5 says about three-quarters of its counter-terrorism work concerns Islamist extremism.¹ Islamist groups caused most of the world's terrorism deaths in 2025.² Yet few people in the West have read what Islamists preach, or the Quran verses and classical laws they rely on.

This book sets out who the Islamists are, what they believe and why, where their scripture comes from, the myths that protect them, their track record, and what free societies can do.

THEY DO NOT COME IN PEACE

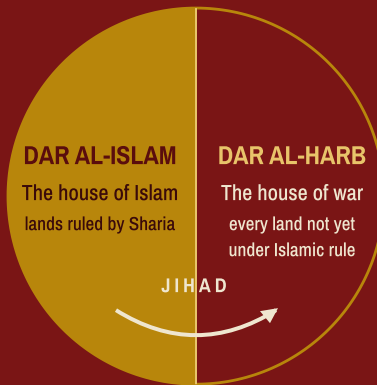
Al-Qaeda killed 2,977 people on 11 September 2001. Islamic State gunmen and bombers killed 130 in Paris in 2015, and a bomber inspired by it killed 22 at a pop concert in Manchester in 2017. Islamic State ordered its followers to kill any "disbelieving American or European", Australian or Canadian, "in any manner or way".³ Pages 12–19 set out the record.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Parts 1–2 show who the Islamists are and what they believe. **Parts 3–4** cover their scripture and their 1,400-year record. **Part 5** shows them in power and in action, from Iran to Islamic State. **Part 6** is what you can do, with a checklist on page 23 and their vocabulary on page 24.

How to read the evidence. Quran verses are quoted in Pickthall's 1930 translation. Sayings of Muhammad (*hadith*) are cited by collection and number. Every factual claim has a numbered source on pages 25–26.

The world as the jihadists see it



FIGHT UNTIL "RELIGION IS ALL FOR ALLAH" (QURAN 8:39)

1. **Only Allah may make law.** Man-made law and democracy are rebellion against him, and rulers who do not impose Sharia are not true Muslims.⁴
2. **The world is split in two:** the house of Islam and the house of war. Classical law made extending Muslim rule a duty.⁵
3. **The goal is the whole earth.** Maududi: Islam wishes to destroy every state opposed to it "anywhere on the face of the earth".⁶
4. **The near enemy first.** "To fight an enemy who is near is more important than to fight an enemy who is far": overthrow the governments of Muslim lands.⁷
5. **Then the far enemy: the West.** Killing "the Americans and their allies—civilians and military" is "an individual duty".⁸ Islamic State added every "European", Australian and Canadian.³
6. **The prize is a caliphate,** one Islamic state ruling all Muslims, and then the conquest of "your Rome".⁹
7. **Death is victory.** Those killed "in the way of Allah" are "living" with their Lord (3:169).

This book shows how they act on this worldview, and how we stop them.

What is an Islamist?

An Islamist believes that Allah's law, not the people, must govern society, and works to make Islamic law the law of the land.

MOVEMENT	FOUNDED	AIM AND METHOD
Muslim Brotherhood	Egypt, 1928, Hassan al-Banna	An Islamic state built from below through preaching, charities and politics
Jamaat-e-Islami	India, 1941, Abul A'la Maududi	An Islamic state; a major party in Pakistan and Bangladesh
Hizb ut-Tahrir	Jerusalem, 1953	A worldwide caliphate; banned as terrorist in the UK in 2024 ¹⁰
Islamic Republic of Iran	1979, Ayatollah Khomeini	A Shia Islamist state; exports its revolution through militias
Salafi-jihadists	al-Qaeda 1988; Islamic State 2014	A caliphate by armed jihad now; terrorism against the West

WARNING SIGNS YOU CAN SEE AND HEAR

- **Says:** democracy and "man-made law" are illegitimate; Sharia must be state law; apostates, blasphemers or gay people deserve death; other Muslims are "kafir".
- **Displays:** support for banned groups, their flags or propaganda; praise for attacks and "martyrs". Showing a banned group's symbols can be a crime.¹¹
- **Does:** pressures others to obey religious rules; threatens people over "blasphemy"; cuts young people off from family and friends.

These fit the UK's 2024 definition of extremism.¹² **Appearance tells you little; words and actions tell you most.** Report concerns to the police anti-terrorism hotline, 0800 789 321, or [gov.uk/ACT](https://www.gov.uk/act).¹³

The leaders and preachers

A few ideologues wrote the doctrine. A few preachers spread it.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Muslim Brotherhood slogan "Allah is our objective. The Prophet is our leader. Qur'an is our law. Jihad is our way. Dying in the way of Allah is our highest hope."¹⁴

Maududi, 1939 "Islam wishes to destroy all States and Governments anywhere on the face of the earth which are opposed to the ideology and programme of Islam."⁶

Sayyid Qutb, 1964 Jihad passed through stages from patience to all-out war, and only the final stage now applies.⁴

FIGURE	ROLE
Abdullah Azzam (d. 1989)	Called all Muslims to armed jihad; bin Laden's mentor ¹⁵
Osama bin Laden (d. 2011)	Founded al-Qaeda; declared war on America, 1996; ordered 9/11 ¹⁶
Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi (d. 2019)	Proclaimed caliph of Islamic State, 2014 ¹⁷
Anwar al-Awlaki (d. 2011)	Online preacher linked to 99 extremists in the US and Europe ¹⁸
Abu Hamza	Finsbury Park imam; convicted of soliciting murder, 2006 ¹⁹
Anjem Choudary	His network linked to 25% of UK Islamist terror offenders, 1998–2015; jailed for life, 2024 ²⁰

Why preachers matter. A preacher claims to tell young men what Allah demands of them. One British network's leader held recruits through his "sacred authority" as a scholar.²¹ And 70% of Islamic State's foreign recruits had only basic religious knowledge, so they relied on what they were told.²²

The principles they cite

Islamists build their doctrine from real verses and classical laws.

ALLAH ALONE RULES (*HAKIMIYYA*)

5:44 "Whoso judgeth not by that which Allah hath revealed: such are disbelievers."

12:40 "The decision rests with Allah only."

FIGHT UNTIL THE RELIGION IS ALLAH'S

9:5 "...slay the idolaters wherever ye find them, and take them (captive), and besiege them, and prepare for them each ambush."

9:29 "Fight against such of those who have been given the Scripture as believe not in Allah... until they pay the tribute readily, being brought low."

8:39 "And fight them until persecution is no more, and religion is all for Allah."

2:216 "Warfare is ordained for you, though it is hateful unto you."

LOYALTY AND ENMITY (*AL-WALA' WAL-BARA'*)

5:51 "Take not the Jews and the Christians for friends."

The three choices. A hadith tells commanders to offer enemies Islam; if they refuse, "demand from them the Jizya"; if they refuse that, "seek Allah's help and fight them" (Sahih Muslim 1731).²³ Classical law divided the world into the "house of Islam" and the "house of war", and made extending Muslim rule a duty on the community.⁵

The sword verse. Classical scholars held that 9:5 cancelled earlier verses of peace, and Islamists rely on this.²⁴ Most Muslim scholars today tie the war verses to Muhammad's own wars and cite "begin not hostilities" (2:190).

The goal: a world under Sharia

Islamists do not want a place within free societies. They want to replace them.

Their writings are explicit. Maududi called for a "universal revolution" to replace un-Islamic governments everywhere.⁶ Hizb ut-Tahrir's stated aim is to restore the caliphate, a single Islamic state ruling all Muslims under Sharia.¹⁰ In 2014 Islamic State declared that caliphate and demanded the allegiance of every Muslim on earth.¹⁷ Iran's constitution commits the state to spreading its revolution abroad.²⁵

TWO ROADS TO THE SAME GOAL

The fast road: jihad. Al-Qaeda and Islamic State seek to seize territory and impose Sharia by force now, and to terrorise the West into retreat.

The slow road: preaching and influence. The Brotherhood tradition works through preaching, schools, charities, community bodies and elections, building an Islamic society from within. A 2025 French government report warned of Brotherhood "entryism" at local level, linking 139 places of worship to its network.²⁶

Why young men answer. The ideology offers certainty, belonging, a cause and a promise: those killed "in the way of Allah" are "living" with their Lord (3:169), and Allah "hath bought from the believers their lives and their wealth because the Garden will be theirs" (9:111). Research finds identity, purpose and the pull of a group matter as much as doctrine.²⁷

WHAT THE EVIDENCE SHOWS

The goal of Islamist movements is a state, and ultimately a world, governed by Sharia, in their founders' own words. Islamists are determined and organised, and they are playing a long game.

Myths about Islamists

Islamists benefit from comfortable myths. Each one fails against the record.

Myth: "Non-violent Islamists have peaceful aims." Their methods may be peaceful; their aim is not. Britain's 2015 review of the Muslim Brotherhood found aspects of its ideology and tactics "contrary to our values".²⁸ When the Brotherhood won Egypt's presidency in 2012, Mohamed Morsi issued a decree placing himself beyond the reach of the courts within five months.²⁹

Myth: "Iran's revolution was about freedom." Many Iranians who backed the 1979 revolution wanted an end to the Shah's dictatorship. What they got was a theocracy. Iran made the hijab compulsory by 1981, executed thousands of political prisoners in 1988, and in 2022 killed hundreds of protesters after Mahsa Amini died in morality-police custody.³⁰

Myth: "The Ottoman Empire was a tolerant, multicultural state." It allowed Christians and Jews to run their own communities (the *millet* system), as second-class subjects who paid special taxes. It took Christian boys from the Balkans to convert and serve as soldiers (the *devshirme*). In 1914 the sultan, as caliph, declared jihad, and from 1915 the Ottoman government's campaign against the Armenians killed an estimated 600,000 to 1.5 million people.³¹

Myth: "Islamism is just a reaction to Western wars." The Muslim Brotherhood was founded in 1928, twenty years before Israel existed and seventy years before 9/11. Islamists use Western policies as a grievance, but the ideology came first.³²

Myth: "Islamists are all terrorists." Most are not. They work through mosques, charities, schools and politics, which is why they are harder to see and often more effective.

Muhammad, the Quran and the Bible

Muslims believe the Quran is Allah's word, revealed to Muhammad. Historians study it as a text with a history.

Muhammad (c. 570–632) was a merchant of Mecca who, from about 610, said he received revelations through the angel Gabriel. Persecuted in Mecca, he moved to Medina in 622 and became its ruler.³³ His earliest biographer counts 27 military expeditions he led in person and 38 he sent out.³⁴ After a siege in 627, the men of the Jewish Banu Qurayza tribe were beheaded, "600 or 700 in all", and the women and children enslaved.^{34,35} Because Muslims regard his life as the perfect model, his wars became part of Islamic law.

Who wrote the Quran? Muslims believe it is the exact word of Allah, recited by Muhammad. Tradition holds that it was collected after his death and standardised under the caliph Uthman around 650.³³ Two leaves held by the University of Birmingham were radiocarbon-dated in 2015 to between 568 and 645.³⁶ Some historians argue that the text took shape over a longer period.

THE QURAN AND THE BIBLE

The Torah and the Gospels are far older. The Torah took its final form centuries before Christ, and the Gospels were written in the first century AD.³⁷ The Quran accepts both as earlier revelations: "We caused Jesus, son of Mary, to follow in their footsteps... and We bestowed on him the Gospel" (5:46).

But it accuses Jews and Christians of changing their scriptures ("They change words from their context", 5:13). It denies that Jesus was crucified ("they slew him not nor crucified him", 4:157) and that he is the Son of God. Islam presents itself as the final, corrected revelation, superseding the faiths before it.

Islam's golden age, and what went wrong

Islamic civilisation once led the world in science. The question is why it lost that lead, and who gains from the decline.

The golden age. From the eighth to the thirteenth centuries, cities under Muslim rule were among the most advanced on earth. Baghdad's House of Wisdom translated Greek philosophy and science into Arabic. Al-Khwarizmi's work gave us "algebra" and "algorithm". Ibn Sina's *Canon of Medicine* was taught in European universities until the seventeenth century, and Ibn al-Haytham laid foundations of modern optics.³⁸ Much of the work was done by Christians, Jews and Persians alongside Muslims, in a period of relative openness.

SIGNS OF DECLINE

- The Mongols sacked Baghdad in 1258.³⁹
- The Ottoman Empire did not let Muslims print in Arabic script until 1727, nearly three centuries after Gutenberg.⁴⁰
- The UN's *Arab Human Development Report* (2003) found the whole Arab world translated about 330 books a year, one-fifth of the number Greece translated.⁴¹

Why? Historians point to several causes: invasions, lost trade routes, and a long shift in which religious scholars allied with rulers and narrowed room for independent thought.⁴²

Who gains. Islamist rule concentrates money and power in the hands of those who claim to speak for Allah. In Iran, the Revolutionary Guards control a large share of the economy.⁴³ In 2014 Islamic State earned about \$1 million a day from oil.⁴⁴ Where clerics and commanders rule in Allah's name, questioning them becomes blasphemy, which protects their wealth and power.

1,400 years, and today

Muslim rule spread across three continents by conquest. Where Islamists rule today, the results can be measured.

CONQUEST

632–633	Ridda wars force Arabian tribes that left Islam back into it ⁴⁵
634–651	Syria, Palestine, Iraq and Persia conquered ⁴⁶
639–709	Egypt and North Africa
711	Spain and Sindh invaded
1000–1206	Raids into India; Delhi Sultanate founded ⁴⁷
1453	Constantinople falls to the Ottomans
1529, 1683	Ottoman sieges of Vienna fail

Within about 120 years of Muhammad's death, Muslim rule stretched from Spain to the borders of China.⁴⁶ Conquered peoples converted over the following centuries under the pressure of the *jizya* tax and legal inequality.⁴⁸ Islam also spread peacefully through trade, as in Indonesia.

ISLAMIST RULE TODAY

- **Iran and Saudi Arabia** carried out about 93% of the world's recorded executions in 2025.⁴⁹
- **Afghanistan:** the Taliban flogged at least 1,110 people in public in 2025 and bar girls from secondary school.⁵⁰
- **Islamic State** enslaved Yazidi women and girls; a UN inquiry found it committed genocide.⁵¹
- **Pakistan:** 104 people accused of blasphemy were killed by mobs, 1994–2024.⁵²
- Twelve countries allow the death penalty for blasphemy or apostasy.⁵³

Would you want to live under Sharia?

If Islamists succeed, their law comes with them. These are its classical rules.

CLASSICAL SHARIA RULE	SOURCE
Leaving Islam is punishable by death	Bukhari 6922
Blasphemy against the Prophet: death in most schools	Ibn Taymiyya, <i>al-Sarim al-Maslul</i>
Theft: amputation of the hand	Quran 5:38
Sex outside marriage: 100 lashes; stoning if married	Quran 24:2; Bukhari 6829
A woman's testimony is worth half a man's	Quran 2:282
A daughter inherits half a son's share	Quran 4:11
A husband may divorce at will; a wife needs his consent or a judge	Quran 2:229
Jews and Christians pay a special tax and are "brought low"	Quran 9:29

Europe's human-rights court ruled in 2003 that a regime based on Sharia "clearly diverges from Convention values", above all in its criminal law and its rules on women.⁵⁴

HOW ISLAMISTS SEE US

Bin Laden: "when people see a strong horse and a weak horse, by nature, they will like the strong horse."⁵⁵ He cited America's retreats from Beirut and Somalia as proof it could be driven out.¹⁶ Anjem Choudary told followers to "take money from the kuffar... Jihad Seeker's Allowance."⁵⁶ Tolerance that will not enforce its own laws is read as weakness.

ASK YOURSELF

Would you accept a law that could execute your child for changing religion, or count your daughter's word as half your son's? Islamists want it restored; several states enforce it today.

Iran, Europe, Britain

Islamists use democracy's freedoms to advance a system that would abolish them.

IRAN: FROM EXILE IN FRANCE TO THEOCRACY

Ayatollah Khomeini led the 1979 revolution from exile, including four months in a village outside Paris, protected by French law and free to address the world's press.⁵⁷ Once in power he built the world's leading Islamist state, with clerical rule, compulsory hijab and mass executions, and funded militias abroad.

EUROPE: TERROR AND INFLUENCE

Islamic State gunmen and bombers killed 130 people in Paris in November 2015.⁵⁸ France's own government now warns of Brotherhood "entryism".²⁶ Sweden's police list 19 "particularly vulnerable" areas marked by "parallel societal structures" and religious extremism.⁵⁹

BRITAIN: USING THE SYSTEM

- Hizb ut-Tahrir campaigned legally for a caliphate for decades before it was banned in 2024.¹⁰ Abu Qatada fought deportation through the courts for about eight years.⁶⁰
- An election court voided Tower Hamlets' 2014 mayoral election for corrupt practices, including "undue spiritual influence" through a letter from 101 imams.⁶¹
- An inquiry found a "co-ordinated, deliberate and sustained" effort to introduce "an intolerant and aggressive Islamist ethos" into some Birmingham schools.⁶²
- Sharia councils go uncounted; the government's review found "no one disputed" that they discriminate against women.⁶³
- A teacher who showed a cartoon of Muhammad in 2021 was still in hiding in 2024.⁶⁴ In 2024, 32% of British Muslims polled called Sharia in the UK within 20 years desirable.⁶⁵

Islamic State: an Islamic kingdom everywhere

Islamic State did not want a seat at the table. It wanted to rule the world, and for five years it ruled a country.

In June 2014 Islamic State declared a caliphate across Iraq and Syria and demanded the allegiance of every Muslim on earth.¹⁷ At its height it held about a third of Syria and 40% of Iraq. When the US-led coalition took it back, it freed about 110,000 square kilometres and nearly eight million people.⁶⁶

WHAT IT DID WITH ITS KINGDOM

- **Genocide.** From August 2014 it killed and enslaved Yazidis in Sinjar. A UN inquiry found in 2016 that genocide "has occurred and is ongoing"; more than 3,200 Yazidi women and children were still in its hands.⁵¹
- **Slavery.** It sold captured women and girls, and published rules for keeping sex slaves.⁶⁷
- **Sharia courts.** It crucified, stoned, beheaded and threw people from buildings in public, and filmed it.
- **Oil and taxes.** It ran oil fields, taxed its subjects and charged *jizya* to Christians.⁴⁴

ITS ORDER TO FOLLOWERS IN THE WEST, SEPTEMBER 2014

"If you can kill a disbelieving American or European – especially the spiteful and filthy French – or an Australian, or a Canadian, or any other disbeliever... then rely upon Allah, and kill him in any manner or way however it may be."³

Defeated, not gone. Mosul fell in July 2017 and the last village, Baghouz, in March 2019.⁶⁸ But Islamic State and its branches were still the world's deadliest terrorist group in 2024, killing 1,805 people in 22 countries.⁶⁹

Al-Qaeda: war on the West

Al-Qaeda declared war on America in 1996, on Americans and their allies everywhere in 1998, and struck New York in 2001.

YEAR	STEP
1988	Founded by Osama bin Laden and Abdullah Azzam's Afghan veterans ⁷⁰
1996	Bin Laden declares war on the United States ¹⁶
1998	"World Islamic Front" fatwa: killing Americans and their allies is "an individual duty for every Muslim" ⁸
1998	US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania bombed: 224 killed ⁷¹
2001	11 September: 2,977 killed in New York, Washington and Pennsylvania ⁷¹
2015	Its Yemeni branch claims the <i>Charlie Hebdo</i> massacre in Paris: 12 killed ⁷¹

ITS BRANCHES TODAY

- **AQAP** (al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula), in Yemen.
- **Al-Shabaab**, in Somalia and Kenya.
- **JNIM**, in the Sahel: Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger.
- **AQIS** (al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent).⁷⁰

THE LESSON

Al-Qaeda told the world what it would do, years in advance, in plain words. It was not taken at its word until 2,977 people were dead. Islamists usually mean exactly what they say.

The war on Western cities

Islamists have killed concert-goers, commuters, office workers, teachers and children across the West.

DATE	PLACE	KILLED	BY
11 Sep 2001	New York, Washington	2,977	al-Qaeda
11 Mar 2004	Madrid trains	191	al-Qaeda-inspired
7 Jul 2005	London transport	52	al-Qaeda-linked
7 Jan 2015	Paris, <i>Charlie Hebdo</i>	12	AQAP
13 Nov 2015	Paris, Bataclan and cafés	130	Islamic State
22 Mar 2016	Brussels airport and metro	32	Islamic State
14 Jul 2016	Nice, Bastille Day	86	IS-inspired
19 Dec 2016	Berlin Christmas market	13	IS-inspired
22 Mar 2017	Westminster	5	IS-inspired
22 May 2017	Manchester Arena	22	IS-inspired
3 Jun 2017	London Bridge	8	IS-inspired
16 Oct 2020	Conflans: teacher Samuel Paty	1	Islamist
2 Nov 2020	Vienna	4	IS supporter
15 Oct 2021	Leigh-on-Sea: Sir David Amess MP	1	IS supporter
13 Oct 2023	Arras: teacher Dominique Bernard	1	IS supporter
22 Mar 2024	Moscow, Crocus City Hall	over 140	IS-Khorasan
23 Aug 2024	Solingen festival	3	IS-claimed

Sources for each attack: note⁷². Victims only; attackers not counted.

Iran: an Islamist state that kills abroad

Iran is not only an Islamist state at home. It runs a network of militias and assassins across the world, including in Britain.

THE MACHINERY

- **The Quds Force** is the foreign-operations arm of the Revolutionary Guards. It arms and directs Iran's allied militias and has run assassination plots abroad.⁷³
- **Hezbollah** was founded in Lebanon in 1982, trained and organised by about 1,500 Revolutionary Guards.⁷⁴
- **Its allies** include militias in Iraq and Syria, the Houthis in Yemen, and Hamas.⁴³

THE RECORD

- **Buenos Aires, 1994.** The bombing of the AMIA Jewish centre killed 85. In 2024 Argentina's top criminal court ruled that Iran planned it and Hezbollah carried it out.⁷⁵
- **Britain, 2022–25.** MI5 counted 20 "potentially lethal" Iran-backed plots in the UK between January 2022 and October 2024, then more than 20 more in the following year alone.⁷⁶

THE POINT

Iran's constitution commits it to spreading its revolution.²⁵ Khomeini said Iran must "export our revolution to the other parts of the world".⁷⁷ Forty years of bombs, militias and murder plots show that it means it.

The Taliban: Sharia in practice

Afghanistan shows what Islamists build when nobody stops them: a country where half the population is shut indoors.

The Taliban retook Afghanistan in August 2021 and imposed their version of Sharia step by step.

DATE	RULE
Mar 2022	Girls banned from secondary school ⁷⁸
Dec 2022	Women banned from universities, and from working for aid groups ⁷⁸
Dec 2022	First public execution since the takeover; at least 10 by April 2025 ⁷⁹
Apr 2023	Afghan women banned from working for the UN ⁷⁸
Aug 2024	"Vice and virtue" law: women must cover their faces in public, and their voices must not be heard in public ⁸⁰

FLOGGINGS

The UN recorded 274 men, 58 women and 2 boys flogged in public in six months, and at least 213 more people in the first three and a half months of 2025.⁷⁹

THE VERDICT

A UN expert said the Taliban "may be responsible for gender apartheid".⁸¹ In July 2025 the International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant for the Taliban's supreme leader for the crime against humanity of gender persecution.⁸²

Africa: the new front

The jihadists' kingdom has moved south. More than half of the world's terrorism deaths now happen in the Sahel.

In 2024 the Sahel, the belt of desert south of the Sahara, accounted for 51% of all terrorism deaths in the world: 3,885 people.⁶⁹ Al-Qaeda's JNIM and Islamic State's Sahel branch are fighting to turn Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger into Islamic emirates.

BOKO HARAM AND ISLAMIC STATE IN WEST AFRICA

Its name is usually translated as "Western education is forbidden". In April 2014 it kidnapped 276 schoolgirls from Chibok, in north-east Nigeria, and its leader announced he would sell them.⁸³ A faction pledged allegiance to Islamic State in 2015.

AL-SHABAAB IN SOMALIA AND KENYA

- **Westgate mall, Nairobi, 2013:** 67 killed. Gunmen asked shoppers questions about Islam and shot those who failed.⁸⁴
- **Garissa University, Kenya, 2015:** 148 killed, most of them students. Christians were singled out.⁸⁴

WHY IT MATTERS TO EUROPE

The Sahel and North Africa lie on the main migration routes to Europe. Jihadist emirates there would control those routes, and the people-smuggling money that runs along them.

The Brotherhood and Hamas

The Muslim Brotherhood is the mother of modern Islamism. It preaches in the West and fights in Gaza.

Hassan al-Banna founded the Brotherhood in Egypt in 1928. Its slogan ends: "Jihad is our way. Dying in the way of Allah is our highest hope."¹⁴ It spread across the Arab world and into Europe through preaching, charities, student groups and political parties.

HAMAS: THE BROTHERHOOD'S ARMED WING IN PALESTINE

Hamas's 1988 charter says: "The Islamic Resistance Movement is one of the wings of Moslem Brotherhood in Palestine."⁸⁵

On 7 October 2023 Hamas-led gunmen killed about 1,200 people in Israel, most of them civilians, and took 251 hostages.⁸⁶ Britain had banned the whole of Hamas as a terrorist group in November 2021.⁸⁷

IN THE WEST: THE SLOW ROAD

- **France, 2025:** a government report warned of Brotherhood "entryism" and "Islamisation from below", through mosques, schools and associations.²⁶
- **Britain, 2015:** a government review found the Brotherhood's influence "disproportionate to their size", and its English and Arabic messages different.²⁸

TWO FACES, ONE GOAL

The suit and the suicide vest serve the same aim: a society ruled by Islamic law. The Brotherhood picks whichever method works where it stands.

The recruiters: online and in prison

Islamists no longer need a mosque or a training camp. They recruit through phones, and inside Britain's own prisons.

CHILDREN

In 2024 MI5 said 13% of the people it investigates for terrorism in the UK are under 18, "a threefold increase in the last three years".⁸⁸ In the year to June 2025, 42 of the people arrested for terrorism offences, 18% of the total, were aged 17 or under.⁸⁹

ONLINE

Anwar al-Awlaki was killed in 2011, but his recorded sermons kept radicalising people for years, including Islamic State supporters.⁹⁰ Islamic State built a propaganda industry of videos, magazines and messaging channels, and told followers to attack wherever they lived.³

PRISONS

- **2016:** an official review found Islamist extremism "a growing problem within prisons", with "self-styled 'emirs'", "aggressive encouragement of conversions to Islam" and "exploitation of staff fear of being labelled racist".⁹¹
- **2022:** the independent terrorism reviewer called Islamist terrorism the "single largest threat" in prisons.⁹²
- **2025:** three officers were attacked with hot cooking oil and makeshift blades in the separation unit at HMP Frankland. The Manchester bomber's brother was charged and denies it.⁹³

How free societies stop them

Islamism is defeated by knowing it, naming it and refusing to give it room, while protecting the freedoms it wants to abolish.

1. **Be aware.** Learn the signs (page 2) and report what you see (page 21).
2. **Stop the preachers and the plots.** Prosecute incitement (page 22); ban terrorist groups, as with Hizb ut-Tahrir; remove online propaganda; tackle prison radicalisation; protect crowded places under Martyr's Law (2025).⁹⁴
3. **One law for everyone.** Register every marriage. Apply equality law to every religious tribunal. Never let Sharia councils act as courts.
4. **Defend free speech and apostates.** Criticising a religion, and leaving one, must be safe. Back threatened teachers, writers and ex-Muslims.
5. **Vote on it.** Ask candidates where they stand on Islamist groups, Sharia councils, free speech and immigration, and vote accordingly.
6. **Control migration.** Screen arrivals for extremist views and links, and set numbers the country can integrate. Denmark cut asylum grants to 860 in 2024.⁹⁵ The US Supreme Court upheld entry restrictions based on country of origin in 2018.⁹⁶ A ban on people by religion alone would breach most Western constitutions.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Islamists want to conquer the world and make it Islamic. Their method: preach, recruit, infiltrate, intimidate and, where they can, kill. They would destroy free speech, equal rights for women and freedom of belief. Free societies win only if they defend their own laws.

Report it, and make sure they are watched

Several of Britain's worst Islamist attackers had already been reported. A report only works if someone follows it up.

HOW TO REPORT IN THE UK

In an emergency, call **999**. To report extremist incitement or anything suspicious, use **gov.uk/ACT** or call **0800 789 321**; reports are confidential and can be anonymous. The public contribute intelligence to around a third of the most serious terrorism investigations.¹³ Withholding information that could prevent a terrorist act is itself a crime.⁹⁷

REPORTED, BUT NOT STOPPED

- **Manchester, 2017.** Two people who knew Salman Abedi reportedly rang the anti-terror hotline about his views years before, and a Muslim community leader said Abedi had been reported to the authorities.⁹⁸ The public inquiry found MI5 missed "a significant opportunity" to act that might have prevented the bombing, which killed 22.⁹⁹
- **Southend, 2021.** Ali Harbi Ali was referred to Prevent in 2014 and released from it in 2015 after a single meeting with a mentor. In 2021 he murdered Sir David Amess MP. A review found his case was closed too soon.¹⁰⁰
- **The wrong priorities.** Islamism is about three-quarters of MI5's caseload, but only 16% of Prevent referrals in 2021–22. The independent review of Prevent said it was not tackling Islamism properly.¹⁰¹

1. **Report every time.** Write down what was said, where and when.
2. **Demand follow-up.** Ask your MP whether reported people are monitored, and whether Prevent targets Islamism in proportion to the threat.
3. **Expect mosques and imams to report too.** Leaders who cover for extremists should face the law.

Preachers of conquest

Islamist movements borrow the authority of clerics. A young man who would ignore a politician will obey an imam who tells him what Allah demands.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Ayatollah Khomeini, 1980 Iran must "export our revolution to the other parts of the world".⁷⁷

Yusuf al-Qaradawi, 2002 Islam "will return to Europe as a conqueror and victor", "not by the sword but by preaching and ideology."¹⁰²

Islamic State, 2014 "We will conquer your Rome, break your crosses, and enslave your women."⁹

Anjem Choudary, 2016 The judge said he spoke "happily" of "the flag of Islam flying over 10 Downing Street and the White House."¹⁰³

BRITAIN'S RECORD

- **Abdullah el-Faisal**, a London preacher, was jailed for nine years in 2003 for soliciting the murder of Jews, Christians, Americans and Hindus, and deported in 2007.¹⁰⁴
- **Abu Hamza**, imam of Finsbury Park mosque, was convicted of soliciting murder in 2006.¹⁹
- **Abu Qatada** was deported to Jordan in 2013 after about eight years of court battles.⁶⁰
- **Zakir Naik**, a preacher with millions of followers, was excluded from Britain in 2010.¹⁰⁵

WHAT WORKS

Prosecute incitement. Exclude foreign preachers of hatred. Deport those who are not citizens when the law allows. Remove their sermons from the internet. Shut down the networks that host them.

What you can do this week

Islamists count on people looking away. Each of these takes minutes.

SPOT

- ☐ Learn the warning signs on page 2: what Islamists say, display and do.
- ☐ Read the passages they quote (pages 4–5), so you can recognise them when you hear them.

REPORT

- ☐ Save the numbers: **999** in an emergency; **0800 789 321** or **gov.uk/ACT** for anything suspicious.
- ☐ Write down what was said or shown, where, when and by whom.
- ☐ Report extremist posts to the platform and through gov.uk/ACT.

FOLLOW UP

- ☐ Ask your MP whether reported people are monitored, and whether Prevent targets Islamism in proportion to the threat (page 21).
- ☐ Ask your council who runs local religious schools, tribunals and charities, and who inspects them.

SPEAK AND VOTE

- ☐ Defend anyone threatened for "blasphemy", or for leaving a religion.
- ☐ Ask every candidate where they stand on Islamist groups, Sharia councils, free speech and migration, and vote on it.
- ☐ Give this book to someone else. It is free.

The Islamists' vocabulary

The words they use, and what they mean by them.

Bay'a	A pledge of allegiance to a leader. Islamic State demanded it from every Muslim.
Caliphate (<i>khilafa</i>)	A single Islamic state ruling all Muslims under a caliph, the goal of al-Qaeda, Islamic State and Hizb ut-Tahrir.
Dar al-Islam / Dar al-Harb	"House of Islam" and "house of war": lands under Islamic rule, and every land not yet under it.
Dawa	"Invitation": preaching Islam. For the Brotherhood, the slow road to an Islamic state.
Dhimmi	A Christian or Jew allowed to live under Islamic rule as a subordinate who pays the <i>jizya</i> .
Hakimiyya	Sovereignty belongs to Allah alone, so human lawmaking is illegitimate.
Hijra	Emigration, after Muhammad's move to Medina. Jihadists use it for travelling to join them.
Hudud	Fixed punishments: stoning, amputation, flogging and death for apostasy.
Jahiliyya	"Ignorance": Qutb's word for any society not ruled by Sharia, including Muslim-majority ones.
Jihad	"Struggle". In classical law and to Islamists, war to defend and extend Islamic rule.
Jizya	A tax on conquered non-Muslims, paid "being brought low" (9:29).
Kafir (pl. <i>kuffar</i>)	Unbeliever. Islamists apply it to Westerners, and to anyone who rejects them.
Shahid	Martyr. Jihadists use it for suicide bombers and those killed fighting.
Taghut	"Idol": the jihadists' word for secular governments, laws and courts.
Takfir	Declaring someone an apostate, which jihadists use to justify killing them.
Al-wala' wal-bara'	"Loyalty and disavowal": loyalty to Muslims, enmity to unbelievers (5:51).

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They want to conquer the world. This is how we stop them.

Islamists say it openly: they want a world under Islamic law, won by preaching, by numbers or by the sword. *Fighting Islamists 101* sets out who they are, the scripture and classical law they cite, the preachers who recruit for them, their 1,400-year track record and their rule in Iran, Europe and Britain today. Then it shows what ordinary people and governments can do: recognise the signs, report them, make sure they are followed up, and defend the freedoms Islamists want to destroy. Every claim is quoted and cited.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Muslim Brotherhood's slogan ends: "jihad is our way; death for the sake of Allah is our wish."

DID YOU KNOW?

The Manchester Arena bomber had reportedly been flagged to the authorities years before he killed 22 people.

DID YOU KNOW?

Iran and Saudi Arabia carried out 93% of the world's recorded executions in 2025.

EVERY CLAIM SOURCED · 105 REFERENCES

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