

The wrong voice for Muslim Britain

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A group that wants to set up a caliphate in Britain should be banned, says the shadow home secretary

Yesterday Hizb ut-Tahrir (HuT) held a conference in London offering the "one solution that can bring stability and justice to the world" and meet the "legitimate aspirations" of Muslims. In reality, this group offers nothing but despair.

The case against HuT is clear. Britain offers unparalleled freedom and opportunity for all who live here. Yet HuT operates to undermine and ultimately overturn the democratic rights that every citizen enjoys in this country, irrespective of race or religion.

HuT complained in a recent letter to me that I had failed to champion its right to free speech. Yet HuT does not believe in freedom of speech – as it demonstrated by attacking not just Salman Rushdie's views but also his right to express them. I can appreciate the offence caused by Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* and the Danish cartoons, which depicted the prophet in an insulting way. Personally, I found both unnecessarily offensive. But in a democracy we all have to put up with views that we find offensive. We do not put up with calls for violence.

HuT went on to say that "the track record of Hizb ut-Tahrir over 50 years of its existence has been one of consistent nonviolent political activism".

That is a truly extraordinary example of double-talk.

Take just a few recent examples. The British suicide bombers who attacked Mike's Place in Tel Aviv in 2003 had Hizb ut-Tahrir contacts. Terrorist fixer Mohammed Babar (who turned and testified against the Crevice July 7 bombers) was a member. Shoe-bomber Richard Reid was influenced by HuT preachers. And Omar Bakri Mohammed, a former Hizb ut-Tahrir leader – now deported to Lebanon – believes that 7/7 was the fault of the British people and describes the 9/11 bombers as the "magnificent 19".

And that is just in this country.

Across Europe, Africa, Asia and Australasia, HuT preaches a virulent brand of Islamic extremism. Senior Al-Qaeda leaders, including Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, were members of HuT. Its UK website boasts that it is a "global party", directly associating itself with the acts of its branches abroad.

In response to the recent attempted attacks in London and Glasgow, HuT confined itself to this general legalistic comment: "We reiterate our position that Islam does not allow the harming of innocent civilians."

So were those targeted at Glasgow airport and the Haymarket "innocent" or "guilty" civilians? This deliberate ambiguity is telling. Why does HuT fail to condemn these attacks as the barbaric crimes they were, aimed indiscriminately at civilians? Why does it allow comments on its website describing the attacks as a "welcoming treat for the newly formed Brown cabinet"?

HuT rails against "dictators in the Muslim world", yet fails to articulate how it would reconcile the tolerant, consensus-based Islamic state that it – apparently – supports with the conduct and views of its organisation.

It is clear that any recognisable system of freedom and equality would be shortlived under a Hizb ut-Tahrir government. HuT has produced obnoxious, antisemitic publications here and abroad. HuT members in Denmark were convicted for violent anti-Jewish propaganda and its members preach homophobia. Its founder made it clear that "women are not allowed to take charge of ruling", including governmental and judicial positions.

HuT affiliates describe democracy as "alien", "diseased" and "corrupt". In this country HuT discouraged participation in the last general election and warns against integration into British society. And yet, for all the vitriol directed against the West, HuT gives no practical examples of the policies that it endorses. It talks in utopian terms of reestablishing the caliphate, but gives no modern examples in western or Muslim countries of what that might mean in real life.

Its latest pamphlet, Radicalisation, Extremism & Islamism, is typical of this approach. It criticises and seeks to undermine what this country offers, but utterly fails to articulate any credible approach of its own. Perhaps most significantly, HuT fails to explain why legitimate grievances and genuine reform cannot be addressed by participating in our political system, rather than opting out.

The pamphlet complains about the stereotyping of Muslims, a real concern which I share. Yet it is quick to stigmatise Britain and the West as – inherently and inevitably – imperialistic in nature and aims, conveniently overlooking British interventions in favour of Muslim minorities (as in Bosnia and Kosovo), not to mention the history of the Umayyad, Abbasid and Ottoman empires.

HuT does not practise what it preaches. In this country it spins a deceptively moderate tone, which is impossible to reconcile with what its supporters say and do. Until it breaks definitively with its past and the actions of its members abroad, expect further calls to ban it.

David Davis is the shadow home secretary

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