

How did Newsnight end up defending a Syrian child rapist?

From the [Spectator](#)

This week, a Syrian man named Omar Badreddin was sentenced to 18 years in prison, after being found guilty of five counts of rape and violent disorder. Badreddin, along with his brother and two other men, were [part of a grooming gang](#) that abused girls between the ages of 12 and 14. Newcastle Crown Court heard how the Badreddin brothers plied a 13-year-old with alcohol and raped her multiple times.

Omar Badreddin had come to the UK from Syria as a refugee. Unusually though for a grooming gang member, he was the subject of a BBC documentary, which aired in 2016. The aim of the *Newsnight* series was to follow the journey of a refugee family who had settled in Newcastle to rebuild their lives after the Syrian war. Mr Steerpike imagines the programme was meant to be a heart-warming tale about overcoming adversity.

Unfortunately, the programme was derailed when one member of the family, Omar Badreddin, then aged 18, was charged with sexually assaulting a 14-year-old girl. The BBC was accused of sitting on this information for several weeks, until it finally aired a programme discussing the allegations. Even then, the programme's main concern appeared to be about the impact on community tensions, after Nigel Farage had warned about sex attacks by refugees.

In the event, Omar Badreddin was found not guilty by a Newcastle jury in 2016. . . (*discrepancies with the translation of evidence*) Still, *Newsnight's* reporting once Badreddin had been cleared looked more like PR for the family, than an impartial look at the trial.

Newsnight then released a full documentary, entitled 'To hell and back', which suggested that Badreddin's recent ordeal was worse than what the family had faced in Syria.

In an interview with the programme, Badreddin was able to claim that the 14-year-old had been motivated by racism against foreigners and had made up the allegations against him. *Newsnight* failed to challenge this, merely stating that the claims about the sexual assault were 'impossible to explore'.

Near the end of the programme, the presenter chided those who believed cultural differences might be to blame, and suggested that for the Badreddins, 'vindication has come too late to repair the repetitional damage a family with so little prizes so much.'

It's fair to say the *Newsnight* coverage makes for uncomfortable viewing now that Badreddin has been convicted of multiple offences.

The [*Daily Mail*](#) continues

The BBC has since said in response: 'In 2015 and 2016, *Newsnight* followed the story of the Badreddin family, who were Syrian refugees who were settling in the UK. During the year, their son Omar was tried for sexual assault and found not guilty. Two years afterwards, in 2018 and 2019, Omar Badreddin and his brother Mohamed committed multiple counts of rape. They were found guilty and were jailed last week. The BBC reported this. In any situation, the BBC can only report on the facts as they stand at the time, which is what we did in 2016. The Badreddins' subsequent crimes are appalling, and we express our sincere sympathies to their victim.'

The Badreddins brothers also took part in a riot as part of the Black Lives Matter group while on bail for the appalling offences against the girl. The brothers pleaded guilty to violent disorder in relation to a clash between Black Lives

Matter protesters and the North East Frontline Patriots in 2020, while they were banned from the city centre. They were with the Black Lives Matter group when Omar threw two bottles and Mohamed also threw a missile.

The grooming gang which the brothers were a part of have now been jailed for a total of 36 years after a trial at Newcastle Crown Court. *36 years sounds good, until you realise that it is the combined total between 3 of them, ie an average of 12 years, of which the public can hope for them to serve 6 years each.*