

Islamist Terrorism Must Be Punished

by Michael Curtis

Shakespeare told us that the quality of mercy is not strained, but he did not tell us that the quality of justice in the United States and in Britain regarding Islamic terrorism is not flawless. In both countries recent verdicts of the courts did not fit the crime, nor truly appreciate the extent of evil forces of Islamist terrorism.

On August 31, 2016 the U.S. Federal Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit in New York surprisingly overturned a lower court decision that had imposed a large fine on the Palestinian Authority and the Palestine Liberation Organization for supporting a number of terrorist attacks in Israel.

On September 5, 2016 the 49 year old Anjem Choudary, the notorious and extreme Islamist preacher and his deputy, Mohammed Mizanur Rahman, were sentenced at the Old Bailey, the British Central Criminal Court, in London by a British judge, Justice Holroyde, to 5½ years imprisonment for swearing allegiance to and encouraging support for ISIS, and urging supporters to join ISIS in Syria.

All rational people can applaud the fact that Choudary was finally sentenced to prison but in views of his activities the sentence can be considered too short since the legal penalty for his offence can be ten years.

The judicial system, in Britain as in the U.S., certainly has to deal with the difficult and controversial problem of the line between legitimate expression of views and criminal act. Justice Holroyde in Britain held that Choudary was free to express his personal views, but the right to freedom of

expression is not absolute. It is an offence to invite support for a proscribed organization. Choudary had crossed the line between legitimate expression of his views, ghastly though they were, and the criminal act of inviting support for an organization that was engaged in appalling acts of terrorism.

Justice Holroyde explained the prison term had been limited to 5½ years on technical grounds. He held that although Choudary had certainly indirectly encouraged violent terrorist activity there was no evidence of a direct link between Choudary's words and any specific act of terrorism.

Nevertheless, it is a fair comment that the leniency was unjustified: all Choudary's behavior was to encourage action, even if he never threw a bomb himself.

For twenty years, Choudary living in democratic Britain had stayed on the edge of the law though it was obvious he was influential in spreading hate and encouraging young people to join terrorist organizations. His lectures and speeches were well attended. He used the power of social media to influence young Muslims.

The final straw for British authorities was that Choudary, and Rahman, crossed the line in swearing an oath of allegiance to ISIS and to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, self-styled Caliph of the Islamic State. Choudary asserted that obedience to the Caliph was an obligation for all Muslims.

Choudary's luck ran out because in June 2014 the British government banned ISIS and other organizations, including the Palestinian Front for the Liberation of Palestine, General-Command, as terrorist organizations. According to the British Terrorism Act 2000 section 12, a person commits an offence if he invites support for a proscribed organization or advances its activities. The Act explains that proscription refers to terrorism that is defined as when the use or threat of action

is made for the purpose of advancing a political, religious, or ideological cause.

Choudary born in London had been a medical student, then a student of law who became a lawyer, a solicitor, for a short time before becoming a main student of Omar Bakri Mohammed, the Syrian extremist militant leader whose ambition is to attack Europe in similar fashion to 9/11 in the U.S. This terrorist fled Britain after the July 2005 attacks in London in which he was involved.

As a result, Choudary became a professional preacher, enormously influential, linked to hundreds of British jihadists, and responsible for influencing about 500 men to join ISIS. One estimate is that he inspired a quarter of the Islamists linked to terrorism in Britain since 1999.

Choudary was the face of Radical Islam in his organizational activity and in his rhetoric. He was the mouthpiece of Omar Bakri Mohammed, who founded ALM, al-Muhajiroun. When ALM was banned in Britain it reappeared in different forms and Choudary became its leader. He was also the head of Islam4UK, a group proscribed as a terrorist organization in January 2010.

In what must be seen as a despicable and perverse act, Choudary on July 7, 2014, the ninth anniversary applauded the London attacks of July 7, 2005, the series of suicide bomb attacks on public transport that killed 52 and injured more than 700 people. He was friendly with the two terrorists, Michael Adeboajo and Michael Adebowale, who murdered the British soldier Fusilier Lee Rigby in London on May 22, 2013, both of whom attended Choudary's rallies as disciples. He approved the brutal beheading of the journalist James Foley by Jihadi John in Syria in 2014. Equally, he was linked to Jihadi John's successor, the ISIS executioner Siddhartha Dhar. He spoke of Osama bin Laden as a "hero,"

Choudary spoke at street corners as well as mosques, always spouting anti-British propaganda. He prophesized that Islamic flags would fly over 10 Downing Street, the home of the British Prime Minister, and in Washington, D.C. He literally wanted to change the face of London. He argued that Buckingham Palace should be turned into a mosque, and that Nelson's Column in Trafalgar Square be destroyed.

He urged Queen Elizabeth, whom he described as "ugly," to wear a burka. At a rally in the Central London Mosque he proclaimed that Muslims will destroy the "crusade," and establish the Islamic state. He is a true imperialist, calling for the Muslim faith to dominate the world. Using Solzhenitsyn's comment as he wrote in the *Gulag Archipelago* about extremists and evildoers, Choudary's ideology gave him the long term justification and the necessary steadfastness and determination to hold and to spread his message.

To some extent the mainstream media exacerbated the problem for Britain on the grounds of free speech but in essence providing ammunition to the enemy. TV, particularly the BBC on a number of occasions, and newspapers approached him for his predicable views. Choudary made skillful use of all facilities. He used Facebook, You Tube between August and September 2014, WhatsApp, to send his message and had 32,000 followers on Twitter. Investigators found the extent of his technical proficiency: he had used 333 electronic devices.

Amazingly, if the mainstream media should be criticized for providing opportunities for Choudary, the British state actually subsidized him and so has been indirectly supporting terrorism. Choudary and his family of five children, who lived in a comfortable house in east London, obtained welfare benefits of £25,000 a year. With outrageous chutzpah he urged his supporters to claim "Jihadseekers allowances," and argued that Muslims believed in the concept of living on welfare because the sharia law created a welfare state. He declared it is normal to take money from non-believers.

Choudary has given us fair warning: "we are going to take England." He gave us figures, even if some are inaccurate. Brussels is now 30% Muslim; Amsterdam is 40% Muslim; Bradford in England is 17%. Recent elections in a number of European countries, Brexit in Britain, Germany, Austria, Hungary, reflect this fact. Will the U.S. Presidential election also do so?