

Westway warriors: Isis Beatle 'recruited 25 fighters for jihad'

From The [Bradford Zone](#)

A member of the Isis beheading gang known as "the Beatles" is suspected of recruiting as many as 25 fighters from a small patch of west London.

Alexanda Kotey, one of two Britons awaiting trial in America over the kidnap and murder of western hostages in Syria, is thought to have radicalised the young men, known as the "Westway warriors" because they came from homes near the A40 flyover close to Ladbroke Grove.

The number who were persuaded to travel to the Middle East for jihad, including two sets of brothers, is highlighted in a new BBC film based on past investigations by The Sunday Times. *25 is more than originally believed. That the whereabouts of some of them is not known means they might still be at large to plot further terrorist attacks in the UK*

Kotey has hired Sabrina Shroff, a American defence lawyer. She is also acting for Abu Hamza in his application to be released from US prison on compassionate grounds. .



Kotey (left) and El Shafee Elsheikh, 32, (further left) another captured member of the Isis Beatles gang from west London, are due to go on trial in Alexandria, Virginia, in

January. They have pleaded not guilty to charges of torture and murder of western hostages. They face life behind bars if convicted.

Research by the Times has been used by the [With extraordinary access](#) to the contents of a hard drive of smartphone material recovered after the fall of ISIS in Syria, award-winning journalist Mobeen Azhar explores this unique insight into the Islamic State group and the journeys of three young British men who went to Syria to fight.

Featuring intimate videos and photos – most of them never seen before – Secrets Of An ISIS Smartphone reveals key moments in the lives of British men Fatlum Shalaku, Choukri Ellekhlifi and Muhammad Mehdi Hassan while in Syria. Unlike the gruesome Islamic State propaganda designed to be published online, this material offers a different view of life in the so called caliphate; a disturbing picture of young men joking, posing and weapon training – footage never intended to be seen publicly.

Using this material, and reaching out to the people who really knew them, Mobeen seeks to piece together their stories and explores what made these three men join an estimated 900 Britons who, over a six-year period, went out to Syria and Iraq to fight with ISIS and other similar groups.

While much of the media's focus has been on the schoolgirls

who went to join ISIS, a much larger number of the Britons who made this journey were young men. The three men who feature on the smartphone came from very different backgrounds, and one was a private school boy. Reaching out to the people who really knew them, Mobeen pieces together their stories of hope and delusion.

The private schoolboy is Muhammad Mehdi Hassan, 20, from Portsmouth. Choukri Ellekhlifi, 22, and Fatlum Shalaku, 20 and his older brother Flamur all came from the Ladbroke Grove area. All three are known to have been killed.

Ghino Parker, who worked at the time within youth services at the local council, the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, told the BBC that a far higher number of young men from the area had been “lost” to the Middle Eastern jihad.

“There were definitely young people that came through our service years ago that we lost to Syria,” she said. “Actually, the last number that I heard ... is that we lost around 26 from west London.”

I am quite happy to lose them and we don't want them back, thank you.

The programme will be broadcast on BBC1 at 10.35pm on Thursday 15t July and afterwards on BBC3 on iPlayer