



**Abu Qatada meets with convicted Egyptian extremist while on bail  
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On Saturday, the Daily Mail [published](#) a photograph of Abu Qatada and another man who it described as a "friend". The Centre for Social Cohesion has identified the man as Yasser al-Sirri, a [former member](#) of Egypt's Islamic Jihad group who has been convicted in Egypt and sentenced to death in absentia for his part in a 1993 car bomb attack.



Source: *The Daily Mail*, 30/08/08

The Daily Mail reported that Qatada was in conversation with al-Sirri "who then appeared to relay Qatada's words via his mobile to another person". As part of his [bail conditions](#), Abu Qatada - a Jordanian preacher sometimes [described](#) as "bin Laden's spiritual ambassador in Europe" - is under 22-hour curfew and is banned from making calls on a mobile telephone, banned from leading prayers or giving religious advice, and cannot make any statements which he believes will be published. He is also prohibited from contacting around 20 Islamic extremists (including Osama bin Laden) whose names are listed as part of the bail conditions.

Even though al-Sirri's name is not on this list, Abu Qatada's meeting with him - and the apparent relaying of messages to others through al-Sirri's mobile phone - raises serious questions about the nature of Abu Qatada's bail conditions and the degree to which they are being enforced. This is particularly true in light of al-Sirri's past contact with a variety of extremists reportedly ranging from Ayman al-Zawahiri, al-Qaeda's number two, to UK-based extremists such as Omar Bakri and Abu Hamza.

**Background: Yasser al-Sirri**



Source: *BBC News*, 30/10/01

Yasser al-Sirri was born in Suez, Egypt, in 1962. In the 1980s, he became involved in extreme Islamic politics before joining an Egyptian group called Islamic Jihad, which aimed to violently overthrow Egypt's government and replace it with an Islamic state. In 1991, Ayman al-Zawahiri took control of the group which then carried out a series of violent attacks, including assassination attempts against several government officials.

In 1993 the group attempted to assassinate Atef Sedki, the then-Prime Minister, using a car-bomb. The attack, carried out outside an all-girl's school, failed but killed a young girl. Al-Sirri, who had left Egypt for Sudan the previous year, admits he was involved with the group at the time but says he took no direct part in the operation. In 1996, he told the Guardian that he was innocent of the attack but also said that Egyptians had a right to "revolt" against the government:

"There has to be rule by sharia [Koranic law] and the people must decide. If they can't do that through elections, they must obviously revolt against the government. As for my presence in Britain, I came here in good faith and it is incumbent on me not to break its laws."  
[The Guardian: 19 January 1996]

In 1994, he was [sentenced](#) to death in absentia by an Egyptian court for his role in the attack. In 1998, al-Sirri left Egypt for Yemen where he worked in the country's Education Ministry. In 1993, he left Yemen and travelled to Sudan, where Osama bin Laden was then based. [According](#) to the US journalist Lawrence

Wright, al-Sirri met al-Zawahiri there. In 1994, he arrived in the UK - but was detained soon afterwards under immigration laws, after entering the country under a false passport.

Since al-Sirri arrived in the UK, Egypt has repeatedly requested his extradition and has always been [turned down](#). Once in London, al-Sirri denied that he was still working with Islamic Jihad. Despite this, The Guardian reported that Islamic Jihad's press release had been faxed from al-Sirri's telephone number [The Guardian: 19 January 1996]. In 1999, he was [arrested](#) by British anti-terrorism officers but was later released.

In October 2001, al-Sirri was arrested and [charged](#) with conspiring to murder Ahmed Shah Massoud, the Afghan leader who was killed by two Arab suicide bombers just before the 11 September attacks. Al-Sirri was accused of providing the two bombers with fake identification which enabled them to gain access to Massoud. Al-Sirri was later cleared of all charges with the judge [describing](#) him as "an innocent fall guy".

During his time in the UK, al-Sirri has worked closely with many leading Islamic extremists. In October 2000, al-Sirri and Abu Hamza took part in a [demonstration](#) outside the Egyptian embassy. In October 2001, al-Sirri's organisation, The Islamic Observation Centre, reportedly [issued](#) a statement from Mohammed Atef, al-Qaeda's military commander - before it was reported anywhere else. In 2002, al-Sirri took part in a [conference](#) which also featured Omar Bakri, Abu Hamza and Muhammad al-Massari, a Saudi dissident. On 20 May 2005, he and Omar Bakri held a [protest](#) outside the US embassy to demonstrate against allegations that US soldiers had flushed a Quran down a toilet. On 3 February 2006, al-Sirri - together with Anjem Choudary - led the demonstration against the Jyllands-Posten cartoons of Muhammad outside the Danish embassy in London.

#### **Conclusion:**

Although al-Sirri has never been convicted in a UK court there is ample evidence to suggest that he has been involved in radical Islamic movements since at least the early 1990s. During this time, he has been closely associated with leading extremists both in the UK and abroad. That Abu Qatada is allowed to freely meet with such an individual - and to apparently use him to pass on messages - indicates serious flaws in Abu Qatada's bail conditions.

In June the Centre for Social Cohesion obtained and translated several Arabic-language recordings of talks given by Abu Qatada in the UK which demonstrate how he has repeatedly called for jihadist attacks on non-Muslims. See full press release [here](#).

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