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Al-Muhajiroun Hijack Sharia Law Debate

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The Centre for Social Cohesion (CSC) tonight urges the Government to ban the radical Islamist group al-Muhajiroun after police were called to a sharia law debate between CSC Director Douglas Murray and the newly appointed British al-Muhajiroun leader Anjem Choudary.

Al-Muhajiroun hijacked the debate, 'Sharia law vs British law', which was organised by a student society. Members of the radical organisation responsible for the Luton protests took over the debate: the SIA – licensed security guards were al-Muhajiroun and members of the group attempted to intimidate and segregate the audience. One member of the public who objected to the segregation was manhandled and assaulted as he tried to enter the men's section with a woman. He is pressing charges. The Police took statements from eyewitnesses.

The Centre upholds the right to Freedom of Speech within the law – staff from the Centre will debate anyone on an independent platform with a neutral chair. CSC Director Douglas Murray was asked by a student society to counter Choudary's views at a debate they were organising at a neutral venue. The society assured the Centre that they had no external affiliations, that they had booked an independent chair and SIA-licensed security guards.

When CSC staff members arrived at the debate, however, it was clear the Centre had been misled. The security guards were members of al-Muhajiroun. The student society had neglected to mention that the event would be segregated. The society's "independent chair" was involved in the assault. It soon became clear that the student society was, if not a front group for al-Muhajiroun, then at least Islamist-sympathisers hijacked by the extremist group.

According to eyewitnesses, present in the audience was convicted terrorist Simon Keeler - one of the six al-Muhajiroun members convicted in April 2008 for inciting terrorism overseas and terrorist fundraising. The CSC previously revealed that these men had been [granted](#) early release from prison in May this year.

No employee from the Centre for Social Cohesion would speak on an al-Muhajiroun platform. An unrepresentative fringe organisation, their ideology glorifies violent jihad and calls for the murder of non-Muslims and Muslims who do not prescribe to their narrow interpretation of Islam. Until al-Muhajiroun is banned, however, when Anjem Choudary is given an independent and neutral platform to speak the Centre believes it is important his views are publically countered.

Following al-Muhajiroun's [announcement](#) earlier this month that they planned to relaunch, the CSC [revealed](#) that one in seven Islamist-related convictions in the last decade have had links with the extremist group: 15% of all those convicted in the UK of terrorism-related offences were either members of, or have known links to, the organisation.

In 2005 the then-Prime Minister Tony Blair announced plans to ban al-Muhajiroun, originally founded in 1996 by banned preacher Omar Bakri Mohammed. The group disbanded in October 2004 before the government banned it and its two successor groups, the Saved Sect and al-Ghurabaa, were banned in July 2006 for glorifying terrorism. Yet al-Muhajiroun remains legal. Legislation to proscribe the group, however, is already in place: the Terrorism Act 2006 provides that groups operating wholly or in part under a different name may be subject to proscription.

Douglas Murray, Director of the Centre for Social Cohesion, says:

"I am happy to debate anyone's opinions in a free and fair open debate. It's what keeps liberal democracies free. It's what liberal democracy is all about. But under these circumstances – where a mob takes over an event, resorts to violence and forces gender segregation – then such a debate cannot take place."

“I would be very willing to debate Anjem Choudary's views at any debate that was secure and impartial. I look forward to debating him.”

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The Centre for Social Cohesion is an independent think tank

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