

Governments worldwide protest London safehousing of terrorists

by Jeffrey Steinberg

The highest levels of the British Monarchy, its intelligence services, and the British government have provided a safe haven, aid, and comfort, to the top commanders of the new international terrorist infrastructure, in London and in other cities all across England.

The American media have been typically remiss in their reporting of this phenomenon, of London's safehousing of leading international terrorists; however, since November 1995, at least nine governments have denounced London as the center for world terrorism, and each has provided evidence to prove it. In some cases, the protests have taken the form of official diplomatic demarches to British officials; in other cases, the protests have taken the form of detailed exposés in the official government news agencies.

The evidence

- The Peruvian government has made repeated requests to the British government, beginning in 1992, demanding the extradition of Adolfo Hector Olaechea, the London-based head of overseas operations for the narco-terrorist group Shining Path, and the shutdown of their fundraising and support operations in Britain. Both requests have been refused to this day. In fact, Olaechea carries with him a letter of introduction from Buckingham Palace, which he uses as his umbrella of protection. Dated July 25, 1992, the letter reads: "The private secretary is commanded by Her Majesty the Queen to acknowledge the receipt of the letter from Mr. Olaechea, and to say that it has been passed on to the Home Office."

In 1992, during the worst of the Shining Path offensive in Peru, London's Channel 4, of the Independent Broadcasting Authority—a dependency of the British Office of the Interior—coordinated with Olaechea to send two journalists to Peru. There, they contacted Shining Path units, and filmed a report highly favorable to Shining Path. The film was broadcast by Channel 4 on July 10, 1992, despite an official request from the Peruvian government not to provide the terrorists free propaganda.

- On Nov. 3, 1995, the French daily *Le Figaro* wrote, under the headline "The Providential Fog of London," of the bombing spree by the Algerian GIA: "The track of Boualeme Bensaïd, GIA leader in Paris, leads to Great Britain. The British capital has served as logistical and financial base for the terrorists. . . . Great Britain transformed itself into a formida-

ble network of fundraising aimed at financing the guerrillas in the Algerian *maquis*."

The next day, *Le Parisien* reported that the author of the GIA terror attack inside France was former Afghan mujahideen leader Abou Farres, who was given a residence visa in London, despite the fact that he was already wanted in connection with the bombing of the Algiers Airport. Farres's London-based organization, according to *Le Parisien*, recruits poor Islamic youth from the suburbs of Paris, and sends them to Afghanistan, where they are trained as terrorists.

- A London *Daily Telegraph* article on Nov. 6, 1995, by Con Coughlin and Valerie Elliott, titled "Britain harbours Paris bomber," in the course of reporting on the French government protests against London's harboring of Algerian terrorists, also reported on an earlier protest by the Israeli government. "Earlier this year the Israeli government handed a dossier of evidence to the Foreign Office and security services about the use of legitimate Middle Eastern charities in Britain channelling cash to the Islamic terrorist group, Hamas."

- On Nov. 24, 1995, the Egyptian government weighed in against Britain, when the Interior Minister accused the British government of "harboring Islamic terrorists" implicated in the Nov. 19 car-bombing of the Egyptian Embassy in Pakistan. According to British news accounts, Egyptian police raids on a terrorist base had turned up "details of bank transfers from London to finance terrorist operations planned by terrorist leaders living in Britain."

- On March 4, 1996—after a powerful bomb blew up in a central market in Jerusalem, killing a dozen people, and a second bomb exploded in Tel Aviv—the British daily *Express* reported, "As the bomb exploded in Tel Aviv, Israel's ambassador was meeting British Foreign Minister Malcolm Rifkind to ask for Britain's help in beating Hamas. Israeli security sources say the fanatics behind the bombings are funded and controlled through secret cells operating here. Only days before the latest terror campaign began, military chiefs in Jerusalem detailed how Islamic groups raised £7 million in donations from British organizations. The ambassador, Moshe Raviv, yesterday shared Israel's latest information about the Hamas operations. A source at the Israeli embassy said last night, 'It is not the first time we have pointed out that Islamic terrorists are in Britain.'"

The British government's response? The Foreign Office



Nine governments have denounced London for harboring international terrorists. Among them are the governments of (left to right): Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori, French President Jacques Chirac, and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.

officially informed the Israeli ambassador, “We have seen no proof to support allegations that funds raised by the Hamas in the U.K. are used directly in support of terrorist acts elsewhere.”

Later in the spring, when President Clinton convened an emergency heads of state summit at Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, to tackle the problem of terrorism, the Israeli government again raised the issue of British support for terrorist commanders. This time, the British government denied that Israel had ever provided documentation of the London terror links. The Israelis responded furiously, saying they would deliver a formal dossier on the massive British support—including government financial subsidies—for terrorists.

- In March 1996, the German government filed a protest, following the airing of death threats against Chancellor Helmut Kohl and Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel by Abdullah Ocalan, the head of the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK). Ocalan had made the threats from his base in the Bekaa Valley in Lebanon, via MED-TV, the British satellite television broadcasting network, that has allowed the PKK to broadcast its nightly, five-hour propaganda show into Germany, since 1993, at an estimated subsidy of \$7 million a year.

Although the German government statement, issued by the Bonn Interior Ministry, did not mention Britain by name (the Dutch government also harbors the so-called “Exile Council” of the PKK), the timing of the statement—within

days of the Ocalan call for the assassination of the two German leaders—left little doubt that Britain was the major target of the statement, which read, in part: “We have requested our colleagues in neighboring countries in Europe to put measures into effect in order not to compromise internal security in our country.”

- On April 1, 1996, the Saudi ambassador to London, Dr. Ghazi al-Qusaybi, warned the British government that it would lose millions of pounds of contracts, unless it expelled al-Masari. Speaking on an interview with BBC’s Panorama program, Qusaybi said, “If you are so insistent that I am going to tell you that the continuing presence here [of Masari] will harm British relations, and threaten British relations, I’m going to tell you that, yes. . . . No, that’s not blackmail. We are a sovereign country. We can buy wherever else we want.”

- In April 1996, Egyptian Interior Minister Hasan Al-Alfi, told the London-based weekly *Al-Wasat* that “all terrorists come from London. They exist in other European countries, but they start from London.”

- On Aug. 20, 1996, the Egyptian daily *Al-Akhbar* accused the British government of sponsoring terrorism: “Britain is intending to organize an ‘international Islamic conference,’ which will be attended by the leaders of the top terrorist organizations in the Islamic world.” This statement was quickly echoed by the chairman of the Egyptian President’s office, Usama Al-Baz, who, on Aug. 24, called on European

countries “not to give terrorist groups a chance to use these countries as a base to launch and fund terrorist operations.” Speaking on Egyptian television, he added: “We are not demanding that they protect us, but we do demand that they stop making their country a fertile field for destabilization of the security of other nations.”

Next, on Aug. 26, Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Mousa said: “There is a question mark on this issue. We, and many other countries, don’t understand [Britain’s] position. . . . Egypt will contact the British government to find out the truth of the matter and to discuss the possible consequences of such an unfortunate step.”

Then, on Aug. 27, the Egyptian government’s official daily, *Al-Ahram*, carried an exposé of the British role in providing a comfortable base for organizing and fundraising for some of the most notorious terrorist groups in the world. The newspaper charged that almost \$140 million has been solicited by terrorist groups in Britain, with the full knowledge of British Intelligence’s domestic counterintelligence department, MI-5. “The MI-5 has done nothing to stop these funds from becoming bombs,” reported *Al-Ahram*.

The full-page *Al-Ahram* story, headlined “In London, the terrorist meet,” featured a photograph of the bombed Egyptian Embassy in Pakistan, with the caption, “The bombing of the embassy in Islamabad was planned by the *Jihad* leaders living in London.” It described London as “the leading capital of the world in printing and publishing messages, leaflets, magazines, and press releases which include threats and orders to conduct violence.” Some of the groups, the story noted, “even have television channels, like the PKK.”

The report contained a list of the most dangerous terrorist groups operating out of London, including: Islamic Jihad of Egypt, the Islamic Armed Group (GIA) of Algeria, Islamic Salvation Front of Libya, Armed Group of the Martyrs of Libya, the Tamil Tigers of Sri Lanka, and the Topol of Indonesia. The article also noted that Osama Bin Laden, the expelled Saudi terrorist identified as the chief financier of the scheduled London terrorist gathering, “owns a huge villa in the fancy Wembley area in London.”

On Aug. 29, *Al-Ahram* reported that the British Charge d’Affaires in Cairo, Richard Macbeth, was summoned by the Egyptian Deputy Foreign Minister, Nihad Abdul Latif, and given a letter to Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind, protesting Britain’s “double standard policy” and “support for international terrorism.” An official of the Egyptian Foreign Ministry was quoted in *Al-Ahram* saying, “The asylum law in Britain has provided a safe haven for terrorists.”

On Aug. 31, the Egyptian government daily newspaper’s editor-in-chief, Ibrahim Nafi, wrote an editorial, explaining the British government’s motives for sponsoring the terrorist conference: “I don’t think that there is any political hypocrisy, or scandalous paradox, in what is being said, and what is being done, concerning what happens in Britain these days, on whose land a terrorist conference will be held. The conference will gather the *crème de la crème* of the most murderous

criminals, whose hands are stained with the blood of innocent people of the Arab and Islamic world. Britain sees no trouble in holding a conference for terrorists on its land, terrorists who committed crimes much bloodier than the Lockerbie bombing, since the blood of the victims of those terrorists is not as sacred as the British blue blood. . . . Could this not be a new form of colonialism, according to which the nations of the Arab and Islamic world are weakened, through indirect support for terrorism, to the effect that these nations will submit, in a flexible manner, to the dictates of the West led by Britain? Thus, the sun of the Empire, which set in the Suez Canal four decades ago, would rise again. . . .”

The Egyptian attacks against the British escalated in early September 1996. Interior Minister Hasan Al-Alfi told *Al-Ahram* and other Egyptian newspapers, on Sept. 1, that “Britain’s excuses of democracy and freedom of speech are not acceptable. This conference, in which terrorists from around the world will meet, reveals that there is someone who is trying to give help, support, and facilities to those criminals and conspirators, who received visas from British embassies without much trouble, in order to hold their conference to plot and coordinate their policies that call for murder and destruction.”

The Egyptian newspaper *Al-Akhbar*, the next day, published an article by Jalal Dwedat, which stated bluntly: “Britain, which has lost its role in the world, has found that supporting terrorism and harboring terrorists is the best way to find a place in world politics. There is only one explanation for Britain’s policy, which is: Those terrorists are agents of secret intelligence services. . . . The terrorists use British banks to transfer money to hired killers, who carry out their destructive plans against the Arab and Muslim nations. This is not a new role for Britain. It has played the same role in supporting terrorist groups, and in return uses these terrorists as tools to implement her policies during her occupation of these nations.”

On Sept. 7, official daily *Al-Ahram* editor-in-chief Ibrahim Nafi continued his scathing attack on London. “Britain has become the number one base in the world for international terrorism.” When British chargé d’affaires Macbeth wrote to Nafi, complaining about his earlier editorial and arguing that “British law does not ban such conferences” as the planned terrorist conclave, Nafi replied: “We tell Mr. Representative of the British Crown that no one believes any more what is being pronounced by British officials, especially about ‘fighting terrorism. . . .’ British officials try to ignore the fact that the British field is being used, through official laws and regulations, to destabilize other nations by professional terrorists.”

President Hosni Mubarak added his voice to the chorus of protests over British harboring of terrorists, on Sept. 18, in an exclusive interview with *Al-Hayat*. “We have contacts with all the states concerned with terrorism,” he began. “We held the Sharm al-Sheikh international conference to cooperate against terrorism. All the participating governments agreed

on that, but some states, like Britain, give political asylum to terrorists, and these states will pay the price for that. I have warned against that for years, and indicated that terrorism is an international phenomenon. If a European state provides shelter for terrorists, they will, sooner or later, turn against it.”

- On Aug. 20, 1996, the Turkish government got into the act, denouncing a decision by the British to allow the terrorist PKK, the Kurdish Workers Party, to continue its television and radio broadcasts from London. These broadcasts beam into the eastern provinces of Turkey, where the PKK has been waging a decade-long, separatist war against the Ankara government and the Turkish military. The radio broadcasts provide the PKK with marching orders and military intelligence.

- On Feb. 7, 1997, the Libyan Foreign Ministry submitted an official protest letter to the British government, against allowing the Militant Islamic Group to operate on British territory, according to the paper *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*. The protest followed a reported assassination attempt in January 1997 against Colonel Muammar Qaddafi by members of the group. The protest letter, according to the news account, read in part: “The decision by Britain, which is a permanent member state of the Security Council, to shelter elements of that terrorist group who are wanted to stand trial in Libya and to enable them to openly announce their destructive intentions against a UN member state, namely Libya . . . contravenes international charges and treaties.”

- On Feb. 21, 1997, the semi-official newspaper of the Egyptian government, *Al-Gumhuryia al-Masaa*, accused Britain of sponsoring “the terrorism directed against Egypt and Algeria through allowing terrorist groups to have offices there.” The editorial added that “The British government is in one universe and the world’s efforts to eliminate terrorism is in another.”

The editorial was based on recent statements by Egyptian government officials, assailing Britain for allowing a leading figure of Islamic Jihad, Adel Abdul Majid, to set up offices in London. The Egyptian Supreme Court released admissions from several members of the group, at the beginning of the year, that they had received money and marching orders from Abdul Majid, to carry out bombings and assassinations. One unnamed Egyptian official was quoted in the Egyptian press saying that the confessions “only further support Egypt’s belief that London has become the most prominent center for anti-Egypt Islamic extremist groups.”

- On Feb. 28, 1997, the British government publicly denied charges by the Nigerian government, that they had asked for, and been refused, the extradition of three British-harbored Nigerians, suspected of a series of bombings in the capital city of Lagos in January 1997. The three are leaders of the National Democratic Coalition (Nadeco), a Nigerian group whose head is a close associate of British Overseas Minister Lady Lynda Chalker.

For more information

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