

'God destined for soldier to die': Radical cleric banned from UK applauds attack as police are urged to investigate inciting hatred

- Omar Bakri Mohammed is banned from Britain but spoke from Beirut
- It is believed he was secretly filmed condoning decapitation of those opposed to Islam
- He said suspect Michael Adebolajo used to listen to his preachings
- Police urged to monitor radical clerics in Britain to see if comments on Woolwich killing break the law on inciting hatred

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A radical Muslim cleric has claimed 'God destined' for British soldier Lee Rigby to die in the barbaric terror attack on the streets of Woolwich.

Omar Bakri Mohammed, who is banned from Britain, has given interviews in Lebanon applauding the 'heroes' who slaughtered the 25-year-old in an apparently unprovoked attack on Wednesday.

It comes as the police are urged to monitor closely comments by leading radical clerics in the UK to see if they have broken the law in the days since the attack.



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Muslim cleric Omar Bakri Mohammed has said he understands why the suspects would have carried out the attacks and even called suspect Michael Adebolajo (left) a 'hero'



© Reuters

Islamist preacher Omar Bakri is pictured giving an interview today at his home in Tripoli, northern Lebanon in which he praised Michael Adebolajo

The BBC, ITV and Channel 4 have been condemned for giving airtime to Anjem Choudary and other militant Islamists this week.

Critics say the radical preachers in Britain are carefully 'flying close to the wind' by appearing to support the Woolwich killing without breaking laws on inciting religious hatred.

But Bakri Mohammed, speaking from abroad, has gone much further.

In an interview with The Independent, he said he understood why the suspects would have carried out the barbaric attack on Drummer Lee Rigby.

He said: 'I saw the film and we could see that he (the suspect) was being very courageous.'

'Under Islam this can be justified, he was not targeting civilians, he was taking on a military man in an operation. To people around here (in the Middle East) he is a hero.'

Bakri Mohammed has even said he knew Adebolajo personally and converted him to Islam.

According to the cleric, who now lives in exile in Lebanon, he owned a stall in London which Adebolajo would visit.

The pair would talk about the 'meaning of life' and Adebolajo began attending open talks and meetings.

In a separate interview with Reuters today, he added: I think Michael, or Mujahid, is going to stand for what God has destined for him.

'God destined for him to carry out the attack and God destined for the British soldier to die for the cause he believed in.'

He added that while Muslims in Britain condemned the attack, Muslims in Lebanon are 'proud' of it.



© Getty Images

Tears: A man puts down flowers at the scene where Lee Rigby died in Woolwich



© EPA

Victim: Lee Rigby, 25, was yesterday named as the victim of the Woolwich knife attack



© EPA

Questions: Police and security services have faced criticism over what they knew about the suspected killers of Drummer Lee Rigby

Meanwhile the decision to give Choudary airtime has attracted fierce criticism.

On BBC Newsnight he was challenged over video footage showing Michael Adebolajo, one of Drummer Rigby's suspected killers, attempting to justify the slaughter with an attack on British foreign policy.

Choudary claimed 'what he said in the clip, I think not many Muslims can disagree with'.

Former army officer Tory MP Bob Stewart said he was confident the police were monitoring Choudary closely.

'He was sailing close to the wind but he knew exactly what was saying to make sure he didn't go too far. If he advocates racial killing we have a law against racially aggravated crime.'

Yesterday Mr Stewart, a former Army colonel, said the time had come to tear up human rights laws and deport extremists deemed to be a threat to the public.

He said Labour's Human Rights Act, which enshrines the European Convention on Human Rights, should be scrapped immediately to allow the authorities to take tougher action against terror suspects and those who encourage them.

Mr Stewart called on Home Secretary Theresa May to begin the process immediately by deporting hate preacher Abu Qatada to his native Jordan, where he faces terrorism charges.

He said the security services should go through the estimated 3,000 terror suspects they are monitoring and take immediate action against any deemed to be a threat.

Mr Stewart, a former commander of UN forces in Bosnia during the Balkans conflict, added: 'It may not be as democratic as libertarians would like but, I am sorry, we are fighting a war.'



Hate preacher: The BBC released footage of Michael Adebolajo standing behind Anjem Choudary in 2007



On Newsnight: Kirsty Wark (c) interviewed Choudary (l) last night with the Ebrahim College Imam and director Shams Adduha Muhammad (r) and the Islamic Society of Britain executive director Julie Siddiqui (cr)

Senior Foreign Office minister Baroness Warsi spoke out last night against the decision to give Choudary airtime.

ARRESTS FOR 'RACIST TWEETS'

Two men were arrested yesterday for allegedly sending racist tweets about the murder of the soldier in Woolwich.

Police in Bristol detained the pair after complaints about anti-religious messages which appeared on Twitter within hours of the killing.

Officers say a man aged 23 and another aged 22 were yesterday arrested on suspicion of inciting racial or religious hatred.

She said: 'We all have a responsibility, including the media, not to give airtime to extremist voices – idiots and nutters who speak for no one but themselves.'

'The heartening thing in the midst of all this tragedy is that the British Muslim community has, with a unified, unreserved voice, condemned the killing and pledged support for our armed forces.'

'This is a real maturing of the community which has taken years of painstaking work and frank discussions behind closed doors.'

'This time everyone has stepped up to the mark. Yet here broadcasters are undoing all this by giving a platform to one appalling man who represents nobody. I am really angry.'

Choudary, former head of banned Islamist organisation Al Muhajiroun, was behind the planned protest march in 2010 through Royal Wootton Bassett, the town where dead British soldiers were repatriated.

He has been accused of radicalising Adebolajo – the blood-soaked man who was filmed in the aftermath of the horrific attack berating the British government – in the mid-2000s.

Defence Secretary Jim Murphy said on Twitter: 'Banned from France but welcome on Newsnight. A mistake of the BBC to invite Anjem Choudary onto the telly tonight.'

Sadiq Khan, Labour's Shadow Justice Secretary, also condemned the BBC's decision, telling LBC radio that the radical was an 'offensive and obnoxious media tart' with no followers.