

WebMemo



Published by The Heritage Foundation

No. 1194
August 15, 2006

Britain Must Reject Appeasement of Islamic Terrorists

By Nile Gardiner, Ph.D.

In an open letter to the British Prime Minister responding to last week's successful anti-terror operations, the leaders of 38 Muslim groups and six Muslim politicians called for immediate changes to British foreign policy, which is "ammunition to extremists who threaten us all."¹ The letter attacked the "debacle of Iraq" and, in reference to Israeli military action in Lebanon, faulted "the failure to do more to secure an immediate end to the attacks on civilians in the Middle East." It stated that "current British government policy risks putting civilians at increased risk both in the U.K. and abroad."

This letter is a wake-up call to the British government. It shatters any illusions that the government's policy of engagement with leading "moderate" Muslim groups since the 2005 London bombings has reaped any benefits. Downing Street must now rethink its top-down approach to reaching out to the U.K.'s two million Muslims.

Coming just two days after the U.K. averted a 9/11-scale atrocity by arresting 24 British Muslim terror suspects, the Muslim leaders' letter blames British foreign policy for the attempted attacks. This is a thinly veiled threat: Britain should expect more terror attacks unless it changes its worldview. The letter does not condemn the terrorists involved, attempting instead to establish moral equivalence between the Anglo-American-led war on terror and the actions of brutal terrorists.

This statement from so many of Britain's most prominent Muslims—its signatories include the leaders of the largest Muslim organizations in Brit-

ain, such as the Muslim Association of Britain, the Muslim Council of Britain, the British Muslim Forum, and the Muslim Solidarity Committee—should prove a watershed moment in how the British government interacts with the large Muslim organizations that claim to speak on behalf of moderate Islam. The United Kingdom must not give in to blackmail and intimidation. British foreign policy should be shaped by national interest and by British values, not by pressure groups threatening dire consequences if their demands are not met. Downing Street and the Foreign Office should cut ties with organizations that support extremist positions and actively engage truly moderate Muslims who are committed to supporting the war on terrorism.

An Act of Disloyalty

The open letter by Muslim leaders is a cynical act of disloyalty toward Britain. It echoes the propaganda of militant Islamic extremist organizations like al-Qaeda, expounding the view that the West is to blame for terrorist attacks because of its support for Israel and its actions in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other parts of the Islamic world. After the 2005 London bombings, al-Qaeda's second in command, Ayman al-Zawahiri told the British people in a taped

This paper, in its entirety, can be found at:
www.heritage.org/research/Europe/wm1194.cfm

Produced by the Margaret Thatcher Center for Freedom

Published by The Heritage Foundation
214 Massachusetts Avenue, NE
Washington, DC 20002-4999
(202) 546-4400 • heritage.org

Nothing written here is to be construed as necessarily reflecting the views of The Heritage Foundation or as an attempt to aid or hinder the passage of any bill before Congress.

broadcast that “Blair’s policies brought you destruction in central London and will bring you more destruction,” warning of further attacks unless “the people of the crusader coalition...leave Muslim land.”² Last week’s open letter echoes this sentiment.

The open letter to Tony Blair is the modern-day equivalent of the anti-British propaganda spewed by fascists in the 1930s and 1940s. And it raises new questions of collaboration between some Muslims organizations and radical Islamists, ties that have been exposed in several recently published studies.³

The British government should support a Royal Commission of Inquiry into the relationship between Britain’s leading Muslim groups and radical Islamic organizations and individuals, as well as the sources of funding for these bodies. In addition, parliament should hold hearings on the activities of leading Muslim organizations. In the United States, the Department of Homeland Security should increase its scrutiny of British Muslim leaders who may have links with extremist groups in the United Kingdom, Pakistan, or elsewhere and bar any that do from entering the U.S.

Reject Appeasement

As Sir Winston Churchill once noted, “An appeaser is one who feeds a crocodile, hoping that it will eat him last.”

The near-catastrophic attempted terrorist attacks on American airliners flying from London to the United States underscore that the world is engaged in an epic war against Islamic terrorism. Not only America’s conflict, it is also Britain’s war, Europe’s war, and the free world’s war. Had the terrorists been successful, thousands of people of multiple nationalities and religions would have been killed. Britain has thus become a central front in the war

on terrorism, and British security services are currently involved in 70 anti-terrorist investigations, including 24 “major conspiracies.”⁴

But the unchallenged appeasement of terrorism by Britain’s Muslim leaders sets a dangerous precedent and will only increase the likelihood of terrorist attacks on British soil. British ministers, as well as leaders of the opposition Conservative Party, should condemn the statements of Muslim leaders linking the actions of homegrown terrorists to the British- and American-led war on terrorism.

Britain needs a new generation of Muslim leaders who are untainted by association with, or sympathy for, Islamic extremism and who are proud of their British identity. They must be willing to condemn terrorism unequivocally and help root out extremists from Muslim communities. Their role in helping defeat Islamic terrorism will be invaluable.

At the same time, Britain must redouble its efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan, where British, American, and other Allied forces are actively engaged in the fight against al-Qaeda. The war against Islamic fascism will make Britain and the rest of Europe safer and sap the strength of Islamic extremism inside the U.K. The British Government should reject the message of appeasement and remind the U.K.’s Muslim leaders that Britain is a nation at war with a vicious terrorist movement and ideology whose goal is the destruction of the West.

Nile Gardiner, Ph.D., is the Bernard and Barbara Lomas Fellow and Director of the Margaret Thatcher Center for Freedom, a division of the Kathryn and Shelby Cullom Davis Institute for International Studies, at The Heritage Foundation. Peter Cuthbertson assisted with research for this paper.

1. See Open Letter to Tony Blair, *BBC News Online*, August 12, 2006, at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/4786159.stm?ls. See also Inayat Bunglawala, Assistant Secretary-General of the Muslim Council of Britain, “It’s Undeniable: British Foreign Policy is Endangering All of Us,” *The Times*, August 12, 2006.
2. “Al-Qaeda Warns of ‘More Destruction in London’ Over Blair Policy on Iraq,” *Financial Times*, August 5, 2005.
3. For further insight into the links between some of Britain’s leading Muslim groups and Islamic extremism, see Melanie Phillips, *Londonistan* (New York, 2006), and Martin Bright, “When Progressives Treat with Reactionaries: The British State’s Flirtation with Radical Islamism,” *Policy Exchange*, 2006.
4. “Terror Police Target 70 ‘Plots,’” *The Daily Telegraph*, August 14, 2006.