

Hate preacher Anjem Choudary finally behind bars

From [Court News UK](#). The restrictions on reporting meant that while I was right about it being a Central Criminal Court trial (even the venue was under embargo and it is not uncommon for defendants to only be identified by code initials) , and then I had to wait patiently for official news.

Britain's most prolific jihadi recruiter Anjem Choudary is facing up to a decade behind bars after he was found guilty of terror offences. It can today (Tues) be revealed the 49-year-old, along with disciple Mohammad Mizanur Rahman, 33, were convicted of inviting support for ISIS last month.

The extreme cleric has been convicted of inviting support for terror group Islamic State in a series of lectures released on YouTube. Speaking exclusively to Sky News the night before his conviction, Choudary insisted he was merely exercising his right to freedom of speech.

Over decades, Choudary influenced a string of vulnerable youngsters who went on to plot atrocities in the UK and fight with Islamic State abroad. Jihadists around the world, including France and Belgium, looked to him for guidance through his association with banned terror group. Police do not know exactly how many of the 850 Britons who have gone to Syria were directly influenced by Choudary but said he was a 'key' figure in the radicalisation and recruitment drive. Security sources believe Choudary is linked to 500 British jihadis who have fled the UK to join the terrorist organisation in Syria and Iraq

Anti-terror cops pored over 20 years' worth of material following his arrest in September 2014 before charging Choudary and Rahman in August last year.

The jury took less than three days to find Choudary and his co-accused Mizanur Rahman, 32, unanimously guilty of inviting support for a terrorist organisation..

Until now, Sky News has been unable to report his conviction after a judge imposed a reporting ban due to a linked trial of Choudary's associates from Luton, who were also accused of encouraging support for IS.

The juries in the two cases were not aware that they were sitting on connected cases in the same building at the Old Bailey.

Choudary's key lieutenant, Siddhartha Dhar, was arrested at the same time as him in police raids in 2014. Dhar later skipped bail and fled to Syria with his young family, where he began taunting the UK authorities with a series of pictures and online posts. He is also suspected of murdering a group of prisoners in an IS video released in January 2016.

The trial was the most crucial test of the limits of free speech in a decade, since the conviction of another hate preacher, Abu Hamza.

Choudary swore the oath of allegiance to the leader of IS after a meeting in an east London restaurant with a group of five followers. It came just three days after Abu Bakr al Baghdadi declared he had re-established the ancient Islamic Caliphate. Choudary and Rahman then delivered a series of lectures using religious passages to justify their support and urged others to follow their example. One of the obligations both men talked about was to "make hijrah" – meaning to travel to the Islamic State – the court heard.

Choudary's speeches sometimes involved stirring his audience to fever pitch, as they shouted "Takbir!" and "Allahu Akbar!", meaning god is great. He talked of violent jihad, quoting theologians and telling his audience: "We initiate the jihad against the kuffar [disbelievers] to make the name of Allah in

the highest.

"Next time when your child is at school and the teacher asks, 'What is your ambition?', they should say, 'To dominate the whole world by Islam, including Britain, that is my ambition'."

In a speech, delivered in March 2013 entitled 'Duties of the Khalifa State' Choudary said: 'The whole world one day will be under the Sharia, including Hackney, Walthamstow, Moscow and New York.'

ISIL, and its aliases, was proscribed as a terror group on 20 June 2014 while the 'Caliphate' was declared by al-Baghdadi on 29 June 2014. Siddhartha Dhar, named as the new 'Jihadi John', sent a text message to Choudary which read: 'Your words would be gold on Twitter.'

On 1 July, Choudary sent him a section of a speech by al-Baghdadi in which he listed categories of people like doctors, engineers and other specialists and said: 'Their emigration is an obligation.'

Dhar told Choudary: 'Book your passport,' and Choudary replied: 'What do you mean passport? Don't you mean ticket. You better buck up your English else someone else will take that post.'

Dhar, referred to as 'Subject A' in court, joked: 'I will settle for the 'Anger Enemy of Allah' post.'

The following day, in a message to his wife, Rubana Akhtar, Choudary quipped: 'How am I gonna make Hijrah [a duty to travel to the Islamic State] if you keep exceeding your mobile phone limit.'

On 3 July, Choudary arranged a meeting at Hayfield Masala, in Mile End Road, Stepney Green with Rahman.

Others present at the meeting were Dhar, also known as Abu

Rumaysa, Abdul Muhid – jailed for fundraising for terrorists in 2008 – and convicted terrorist Simon Keeler – who was jailed alongside Omar Brooks earlier this year when they were caught in Hungary in breach of their travel bans.

He was also close friends with Michael Adebelaajo, one of the killers of Fusilier Lee Rigby – and caused more outrage when he claimed the young soldier would be burning in hell.

In the end, it was not the hate-filled rhetoric that did for Choudary, but the subtle, insidious support he offered a terrorist organisation. In his interview with Sky News, he was on typically bullish form trying to insist that he had won over the jury.

Now the pair, who have appeared outside the Old Bailey many times to scream their support for terrorists, are at last behind bars and face jail terms of up to ten years. They were both found guilty on 28 July and remanded in custody,

Wearing a white Islamic robe and glasses, Choudary showed no emotion as the jury of six men and six women found him guilty of inviting support for a proscribed organisation. Rahman also stared straight ahead and did not react as the verdicts were returned

Mr Justice Holroyd told them: 'You have been convicted by the jury of offences which you must expect to result in sentences of imprisonment. Whereas previously you have attended court to attend your trial, what the court now needs you to do is to attend court to be sentenced.

'It is true that you have complied with the conditions of your bail. I am afraid however, it has been an evidently grudging compliance and you have made your disregard for the court and its processes abundantly plain throughout these proceedings.'

The judge will sentence Choudary and Rahman on 6 September, when they face prison terms of up to ten years.