

# Portuguese connection – London – Syria – ISIS

*I noticed several stories in the news this week with tantalising snippets of information. I remembered reports about 5 years ago of Portuguese men, some converts to Islam, living in East London and recruiting for ISIS. From, [ABC News International](#), the [Daily Mail](#)*

*On Wednesday – Prosecutors in Portugal say they are bringing terror charges against eight Portuguese men suspected of fighting for the Islamic State group in Syria.*

Prosecutors said in a statement the men were suspected of involvement in the 2012 kidnapping by the group of British war correspondent John Cantlie and Dutch photographer Jeroen Oerlemens. The case was opened in 2013 after Portuguese authorities received information about the kidnappings from British authorities. Over the past six years investigators have traced the radicalization and movements of the men, the statement said.

They converted to Islam and joined Islamic State group, the statement said, and traveled to Syria with their wives and children. Two of them are in Portugal and have been interrogated, the statement said. The whereabouts of the other six wasn't known.

*A couple of them turn out to be living round the corner in East London to where I grew up. The previous week ITV news had already reported that:-*

An east London man who joined so-called Islamic State was behind a recruitment network of Portuguese jihadists which helped to recruit young British men and deliver them to the battlefield in Syria.

Nero Saraiva, a Portuguese national who became a permanent resident in the UK, travelled to Syria in 2012 where he continued to organise a recruitment operation using friends who stayed behind in Europe and money raised in London through fraud. The network targeted young men in Lisbon and London, including one “petty criminal” who was arrested during the riots in 2011, according to an investigation carried out by ITV News in conjunction with Portuguese magazine SÁBADO.

Although the importance of the Portuguese cell within so-called Islamic State is well known, their role recruiting British men and evidence of sophisticated tactics they used can only now be revealed.

Saraiva’s work in Syria was supported in Lisbon by friends including brothers Celso and Edgar Rodrigues da Costa, who later went to Syria to fight. They are thought to have married London twins Reema and Zara Iqbal while living under so-called Islamic State. CCTV images contained in a Portuguese police file and seen by ITV News appear to show members of the network at work during the summer of 2013. Reema and Zara Iqbal were transported to Syria while one was heavily pregnant, with the help of a fixer called “Mr Penguin”.

A brother of the sisters, Ahsan, is revealed as a key suspect in the first kidnapping of John Cantlie, the British photojournalist who is still missing.

*Today* – Cassimo Ture is a suspected member of the so-called ‘Leyton Cell’, an alleged Portuguese gang in east London which has been linked to notorious terrorist Jihadi John and to the kidnapping of British journalist John Cantlie. Ture, 44, is accused by the Portuguese authorities of helping fighters and jihadi brides from Britain travel to Isis’s former “caliphate” in a scheme allegedly financed by a mass student loans and social services fraud. Ture, a jobless father who moved to the UK from Portugal in about 2005, is alleged to have carried a logbook containing the names of all the bogus claimants.

A 218-page indictment filed by Portuguese prosecutors accuses Ture of 'providing fundamental support to terrorist organisations' and 'rejoicing' in terrorist activities with his fellow gang members.

His brother, Sadjo Ture, is also a suspected gang member and twice travelled to the Middle East, it is believed.

Several of the gang members are dead but Cassimo is still living in London with a wife and son, receiving jobseeker's allowance and child benefit, [terrorism offences](#) in Portugal will raise further concern – even though he is almost certain to be under surveillance by the security services.



*Above, left Cassimo Ture and right Nero Saraiva*

Ture was later seen at a friend's council flat nearby. "He's been coming here quite often over the past couple of months," said a source. "Last time I saw him, he was trying to persuade a visiting nurse to convert to Islam."

Ture, who has regularly travelled between London and his native Lisbon, is believed to receive jobseeker's allowance. He has a young son with his wife, and the family is entitled to housing benefit and child benefit.

This newspaper – aided by Portuguese journalists at Expresso and Sabado – first revealed the existence of the [six friends](#)

[had travelled to Syria.](#)

They included Pocas, Ture's younger brother, Sadjo, and two other siblings, Edgar and Celso Rodrigues da Costa. The men were led by Nero Saraiva, whose social media posts showed advance knowledge of the beheading by Jihadi John in August 2014 of James Foley, an American photojournalist.

The alleged logistical roles played by Ture and a third da Costa brother, Romulo – who had both remained in London – was not known until the publication last week of the Portuguese indictment. Romulo da Costa, 40, a hip-hop music producer, was detained this year on a visit to Lisbon and remains in custody in Portugal. He denies wrongdoing.

Five of the six men from east London who joined Isis have since been killed in fighting. Saraiva, the only survivor, was captured this year in Baghuz, Syria, where the terrorist group made its last stand.

The Iqbal sisters, who now have five children in total, are being held in Kurdish-controlled detention camps for jihadi brides in northern Syria.

Reema previously told this newspaper that they had done nothing wrong and claimed she wanted to return to the UK because she missed fish and chips. However, the Portuguese indictment provides the first official confirmation – after reports in The Sunday Times in March – that the sisters have been stripped of their British citizenship.

The files also disclose how the group was radicalised by the lectures of Anwar al-Awlaki, a notorious al-Qaeda ideologue, and praised the killers of Fusilier Lee Rigby, who was murdered outside army barracks in Woolwich, southeast London, in 2013.