

Two jailed following hitman murder of Acton imam after dispute over mosque

A most unsavoury affair. From the [Get West London](#)

Two men have been jailed for the murder of an imam in Acton after a dispute over a mosque.

Khalid Rashad, 63, of Monks Park, Wembley enlisted Leslie Cooper, 38, of Nightingale Road, Brent, to kill Abdul Hadi Arwani, who was murdered on April 7, 2015.

It followed a falling out with him over ownership of the An Noor Cultural and Community Centre in Church Road, Acton. Khalid Rashad, 63, hired a hitman to shoot dead Syrian-born imam Abdul Hadi Arwani as they tussled for control of the An Noor Cultural and Community Centre in Acton. They had been friends and business partners, but fell out spectacularly when Rashad accused Mr Arwani, 48, of favouring Arab Muslims over Jamaican converts like himself.

Rashad, who claims MI5 tried to recruit him as an Islamic spy, enlisted fellow Jamaican and army veteran Leslie Cooper, 37, to murder Mr Arwani to a secluded part of Wembley and shoot him dead with a semi-automatic MAC-10.

Mr Arwani was lured to the scene of the murder by Cooper after he posed as a man called "John" who wanted to employ him for building services... Mr Arwani picked Cooper up in his car and drove to Greenhill where he parked. But Cooper then opened fire on the dad-of-six, shooting him in the car repeatedly.

The jailed duo will now face 32 years each behind bars for the murder

Cooper was arrested on April 12, 2015 and officers searching

his home found a MAC-10 sub-machine gun, live ammunition and a silencer covered with foam and hidden in a wicker picnic basket. A connection between Cooper and Rashad was then established, with the latter arrested at his home on April 14 that year. After detectives had seized Rashad's phone, they discovered deleted Whatsapp messages where he had instructed Cooper how to find Mr Arwani online.

In other messages, he told Cooper "mi want that ting deil with", to which Cooper replied "Yeah mon, mi a go mek it happen" two months before the murder.

The duo were convicted of the murder at Kingston Crown Court in February earlier this year, and Cooper was also found guilty of three counts of possession of a firearm.

They were both jailed for life with minimum terms of 32 years, but the convictions could not be reported until today as Rashad was also accused of stashing explosives in a shed in his back garden.

At the Old Bailey, Muslim convert Rashad, who is the brother of the lead singer of 70s pop group Boney M, was also today found guilty of possession of explosives and two counts of possession of ammunition.

Detectives investigating Mr Arwani's murder recovered the quantity of plastic explosives, detonation cord and bullets in Rashad's shed when executing a search warrant the day after his arrest.

During his explosives trial, Rashad told jurors about an attempt by MI5 to recruit him because of his leading position in the west London Islamic community. He described a three-hour meeting in Whitehall in 2012 when he was asked to inform on extremists in the Muslim community: "I was invited to become an operative – a spy. I was asked to work for the service." Rashad claimed they wanted him to be a "secret agent", but he turned down the offer as he wanted to be loyal

to did not want to be “deceitful to the people I’m serving”.

In 2013, the Standard revealed how the son of notorious cleric Abu Hamza had been backing Al Qaeda and calling for a holy war in sermons at the An Noor mosque in Church Road, Acton. It was also the place where terror suspect Mohammed Ahmed Mohammed, who had alleged links to Al Shabaab, donned a burka in a plot to slip out of the UK undetected.