

# **Tony Blair says murder of Lee Rigby PROVES 'there is a problem within Islam'**

- **Ex-PM says 'the ideology behind his murder is profound and dangerous'**
- **Bold intervention comes of ever of Cameron Commons speech**
- **Blair urges governments to 'be honest'**

By [Glen Owen, Mail on Sunday Political Correspondent](#)

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Tony Blair today makes his most powerful political intervention since leaving Downing Street by launching an outspoken attack on ‘the problem within Islam’.

The former Prime Minister addresses the shocking killing of Drummer Lee Rigby in Woolwich by going further than he – or any front-rank British politician – has gone before over the issue of Muslim radicalism.

Writing in today’s Mail on Sunday, he departs from the usual argument that Islam is a peaceful religion that should not be tainted by the actions of a few extremists.

Stark view: Tony Blair says that Islamic extremism is more widespread than most politicians admit

Instead, Mr Blair urges governments to ‘be honest’ and admit that the problem is more widespread.

‘There is a problem within Islam – from the adherents of an ideology which is a strain within Islam,’ he writes.

‘We have to put it on the table and be honest about it. Of course there are Christian extremists and Jewish, Buddhist and Hindu ones. But I am afraid this strain is not the province of a few extremists. It has at its heart a view about religion and about the interaction between religion and politics that is not compatible with pluralistic, liberal, open-minded societies.’

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He adds: ‘At the extreme end of the spectrum are terrorists, but the world view goes deeper and wider than it is comfortable for us to admit. So by and large we don’t admit it.’

Mr Blair’s comments are likely to be seized on by critics who will argue that by leading us into the Iraq War he has helped to swell support for radical Islam around the globe.

Outspoken: The former Prime Minister addresses the shocking killing of Drummer Lee Rigby by going further than he - or any front-rank British politician - has gone before over the issue of Muslim radicalism

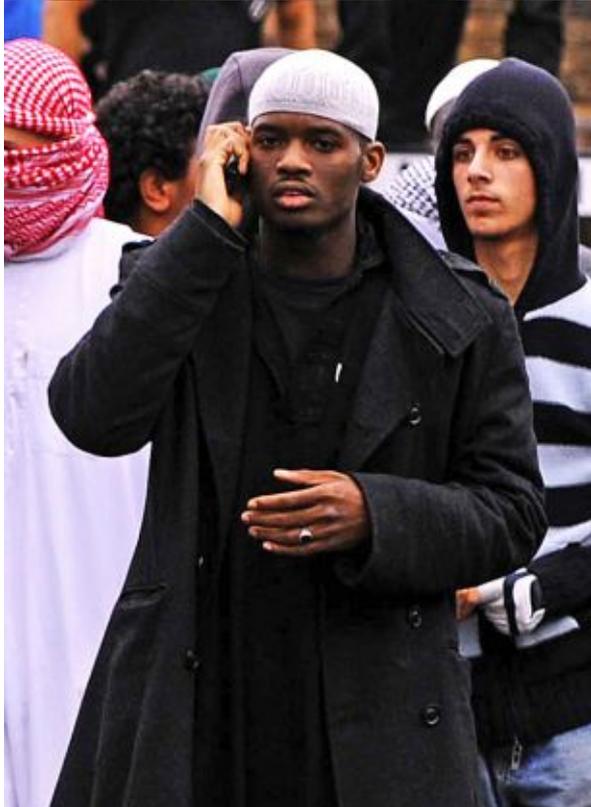
The former PM’s remarks come as David Cameron prepares to make a Commons statement about the Woolwich murder tomorrow afternoon.

The statement will come just hours after the first meeting of the Prime Minister’s Tackling Extremism and Radicalisation Task Force (TERFOR) – made up of senior Ministers, MI5, police and moderate religious leaders – tomorrow morning.

Whitehall sources said that it would be a ‘preliminary meeting’ to draw up the agenda for a full meeting within days. The group, which the Muslim Foreign Office Minister Baroness Warsi, will examine new powers to muzzle hate preachers.

Mr Cameron’s Commons speech is also expected to address the situation in Syria.

In his article, Mr Blair, who is trying to establish a Palestinian state through his work as a peace envoy, also addresses the Syrian situation, warning: ‘We are at the beginning of this tragedy . . . Syria is in a state of accelerating disintegration.’



Accused: Michael Adebawale, 22, left, and Michael Adebolajo, 28, right, have both been charged with the murder of Drummer Lee Rigby, who was killed last month in Woolwich, South London

‘President Assad is brutally pulverising communities hostile to his regime.’ Mr Blair says that ‘the overwhelming desire of the West is to stay out of it’, which he goes on to describe as ‘completely understandable’.

He suggests that ‘the problem within Islam’ can start to be tackled by ‘educating children about faith here and abroad’.

Sir Malcolm Rifkind, a former Foreign Secretary and chairman of the Parliamentary Intelligence and Security Committee, said: ‘Much of what Tony Blair says is sensible.

‘The Islamic terrorists who kill people have the silent support of many more in their community who share their ideology, if not their methods.

‘But even combined, they represent only a small minority of British Muslims, and we must never forget that.

‘However, he appears to be still trying to justify the Iraq War rather than acknowledging that that war provided an unprecedented opportunity for the Sunni and Shia extremists to slaughter so many of their co-religionists.’