

Mustafa Kamel Mustafa, AKA “Abu Hamza,” Sentenced in Manhattan Federal Court to Life Imprisonment

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Convicted After Trial of Multiple Counts of Providing Material Support to al Qaeda Charges Based on Participating in a Deadly Hostage-Taking in Yemen, Conspiring to Establish a Terrorism Training Camp in the United States, and Sending One of his Followers to Train and Fight with al Qaeda in Afghanistan

<http://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/mustafa-kamel-mustafa-aka-abu-hamza-sentenced-manhattan-federal-court-life-imprisonment>

Assistant Attorney General for National Security John P. Carlin and U.S. Attorney Preet Bharara for the Southern District of New York announced that Mustafa Kamel Mustafa, aka “Abu Hamza,” aka “Abu Hamza al Masri,” (“Abu Hamza”) was sentenced today in Manhattan federal court to life imprisonment by U.S. District Judge Katherine B. Forrest for his participation in a hostage-taking in Yemen in 1998 that resulted in four deaths, a conspiracy to establish a terrorist training camp in Bly, Oregon, and sending a follower to train and fight with al Qaeda in Afghanistan in 2000. Abu Hamza, who was extradited from the United Kingdom to the Southern District of New York in October 2012, was found guilty on May 19, 2014, following a four-week jury trial, of each of the 11 charges he faced.

“Abu Hamza is an unrepentant all-purpose terrorist,” said Assistant Attorney General Carlin. “With today’s sentence, he is being held accountable for the many ways in which he supported terrorism and other terrorists through much of his life, including his role in a hostage-taking in Yemen, his plot to create a terrorist training camp on U.S. soil, and his facilitation of violent jihad in Afghanistan. This case was charged over ten years ago and was tried after years of extradition proceedings—and is but one example of our resolve to pursue those who threaten the United States and our interests anywhere in the world, no matter how long it takes. I applaud the many prosecutors, agents, and analysts who have devoted years of hard work to the pursuit of justice in this case.”

“Abu Hamza’s blood-soaked journey from cleric to convict, from Imam to inmate, is now complete,” said U.S. Attorney Bharara. “In May, after a fair and public trial, a jury pronounced Abu Hamza guilty for his leadership and support of, as well as participation in, terrorist activities, ranging from a fatal hostage-taking in Yemen to establishing a terrorist training camp in Oregon to sending a follower to aid Al Qaeda in Afghanistan. After years of fighting extradition, Abu Hamza finally faced justice, as all those who engage in terrorism against innocent civilians must, here in the U.S., and all around the globe, as the terrible events in Paris remind us.”

According to the evidence presented at trial, statements made during other public proceedings including today’s sentencing, and other court documents:

Hostage-Taking in Yemen in December 1998

On Dec. 28, 1998, in Yemen, hostage-takers stormed a caravan of sport utility vehicles carrying 16 tourists, including two United States citizens, and took the tourists hostage by force. Before the hostage-taking, Abu Hamza issued a public warning to “infidels” not to travel to Yemen. In addition, five days prior to the hostage-taking, Abu Hamza’s stepson and other associates of Abu Hamza were arrested in Yemen. During the hostage-taking, the hostages told their victims that they were taken prisoner to free the hostage-takers’ “friends.”

Before the hostage-taking, Abu Hamza provided the leader of the hostage-takers with a satellite telephone, and subsequently spoke with him on that satellite telephone the night before the hostage-taking and during the hostage-taking. During the call on the day of the hostage-taking, Abu Hamza

agreed to act as an intermediary on behalf of the hostage-takers. Abu Hamza also provided advice to the leader of the hostage-takers over the telephone.

On Dec. 29, 1998, the Yemeni military launched a rescue operation to free the hostages. The hostage-takers fought the Yemeni military, using the hostages as human shields. During the rescue operation, four of the hostages were killed and several others were wounded.

Subsequently, in a recorded interview with one of the surviving hostages conducted at his mosque, Abu Hamza said that hostage-taking was “a good thing” under Islam, that people had been warned to stay out of Yemen, that the plan was to hold the tourists captive “until the government let my people go,” and that the hostage-takers “snatched you to exchange you.”

Efforts to Create a Terrorist Training Camp in Bly, Oregon, in 1999

In late 1999, Abu Hamza and several of his followers, including Oussama Abdullah Kassir, Haroon Rashid Aswat, Earnest James Ujaama, and others, attempted to create a terrorist training camp to support al Qaeda on property located in Bly, Oregon. The primary purpose of the Bly, Oregon, camp was to provide various types of terrorist training, including weapons training. In late November 1999, at Abu Hamza’s direction, Kassir and Aswat traveled from London, England, to Bly to assist in setting up the camp. Kassir brought with him to the camp a manual on the use of sarin nerve gas and letters of appreciation to Usama bin Laden and Abu Hamza. Aswat subsequently was present at an al Qaeda guest house in Pakistan.

On May 12, 2009, after a four-week jury trial in this district, Kassir was convicted of various criminal offenses, including conspiring to provide material support to terrorists and to al Qaeda, and conspiracy to kill persons overseas, as a result of Kassir’s participation in the efforts to establish the Bly terrorist training camp. On Sept. 15, 2009, United States District Judge John F. Keenan sentenced Kassir to multiple terms of life in prison. The conviction was subsequently affirmed by the Court of Appeals.

Aswat was arrested in Zambia in July 2005 and then deported to England, where he was arrested at the request of the United States, pursuant to a warrant issued in this district. Aswat was extradited to the United States on Oct. 21, 2014. The charges against Aswat are currently pending, and trial is scheduled to commence before Judge Forrest on June 1, 2015.

Facilitating Violent Jihad in Afghanistan in 2000 and 2001

In November 2000, Abu Hamza requested that Ujaama escort another one of Abu Hamza’s followers, Feroz Abassi, from London to Ibn Sheikh al-Libi, a commander at a terrorist training camp in Afghanistan. Thereafter, Ujaama and Abassi traveled from London to Pakistan. Ujaama and Abassi then separately entered Afghanistan. Abu Hamza subsequently conveyed instructions for Abassi to contact Ibn Sheikh al-Libi, who was expecting Abassi. Thereafter, Abassi passed through an al Qaeda safe house in Afghanistan, attended al Qaeda’s al Faruq training camp, and met with senior al Qaeda leaders. In December 2001, United States forces took Abassi into custody in Afghanistan.

In addition, from the spring of 2000 through late 2001, Abu Hamza provided goods and services to the Taliban by, among other things, directing Ujaama to deliver money to Taliban-controlled parts of Afghanistan.

Ujaama was arrested in 2002 and testified against Abu Hamza as a cooperating witness for the government.

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Abu Hamza, 56, a naturalized citizen of the United Kingdom, was convicted after trial of 11 offenses, including conspiracy to take hostages; hostage-taking; conspiracy to provide material support to terrorists; providing material support to terrorists; conspiracy to provide material support to a foreign terrorist

organization (al Qaeda); providing material support to a foreign terrorist organization (al Qaeda); and conspiracy to provide goods and services to the Taliban.

In addition to the prison term, Abu Hamza was ordered to pay a \$1,100 special assessment fee. In addressing Abu Hamza's conduct, Judge Forrest described it as "barbaric, misguided and wrong," and remarked, "It is important to me that you have not expressed sympathy for the victims of the Yemeni kidnappings."

Abu Hamza's conviction is the result of the close cooperative efforts of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York, the Justice Department's National Security Division, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the New York City Police Department, the United States Marshals Service, and New Scotland Yard in the United Kingdom.

The U.S. Department of Justice's Office of International Affairs contributed extraordinary assistance with the extradition in this case. The U.S. Attorney also thanked the FBI's Seattle Field Office, the Home Office of the United Kingdom, the United States Department of State, and the United States Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control for their assistance.

The prosecution is being handled by the Office's Terrorism and International Narcotics Unit, with assistance from the Counterterrorism Section of the Justice Department's National Security Division. Assistant U.S. Attorneys John P. Cronan, Edward Y. Kim and Ian McGinley are in charge of the prosecution.

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