

# Join the British Army and become a martyr, say Muslims

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A government-backed Islamic organisation is teaching young Muslims that dying while fighting for the British armed forces is an act of martyrdom.

The British Muslim Forum (BMF) explains to young people that even if a Muslim soldier dies in combat while fighting in an Islamic country such as Afghanistan, he will still be regarded as a martyr and a hero for this country.

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The BMF is holding talks across Britain to persuade young people not to follow the teachings of Muslim extremists who instruct their followers that joining the British military is a "traitorous act".

Its aim is to counter radicals' misuse of the term "martyr", which has become associated with terrorist suicide operations. The BMF was a leading member in a taskforce set up by Tony Blair after the July 7 bombings to combat extremism among Muslims.

In its forums its case workers and imams cite Lance-Corporal Jabron Hashmi, 24, a British Pakistani from Birmingham who was killed in combat in July in Afghanistan.

Islamic extremists have called him a "salaried traitor" as he died fighting Taliban Muslims at the command of non-Muslim generals. They argue he should not have received an Islamic burial as he died an "infidel".

However, BMF case workers counter that he died a martyr. "We are calling him a martyr because he died fighting for his country. Islam teaches us to be loyal and abide by the laws of the land. We believe fighting for Britain is not being a traitor. And young people are getting the message," said Khurshid Ahmed, the BMF's chairman.

The BMF, a body representing 600 mosques, is one of Britain's largest Muslim organisations. It is the government's main working partner in the Muslim community.

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