

Hate preacher ignored pleas of 'abuse victim'

Tom Harper, Home Affairs Correspondent

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Anjem Choudary recommended 'counselling sessions' with Habiba Jan's alleged abuser, she claims

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Anjem Choudary, the hate preacher who was convicted of inciting terrorism, tried to prevent a woman who claimed she had been sexually abused

during a forced marriage from getting a divorce when he was sitting as a sharia court judge.

In written evidence to a Commons home affairs select committee inquiry into Britain's sharia courts, Habiba Jan claims that Choudary sought to dissuade her from divorcing her husband in the mid-1990s and instead recommended "counselling sessions" with her alleged abuser.

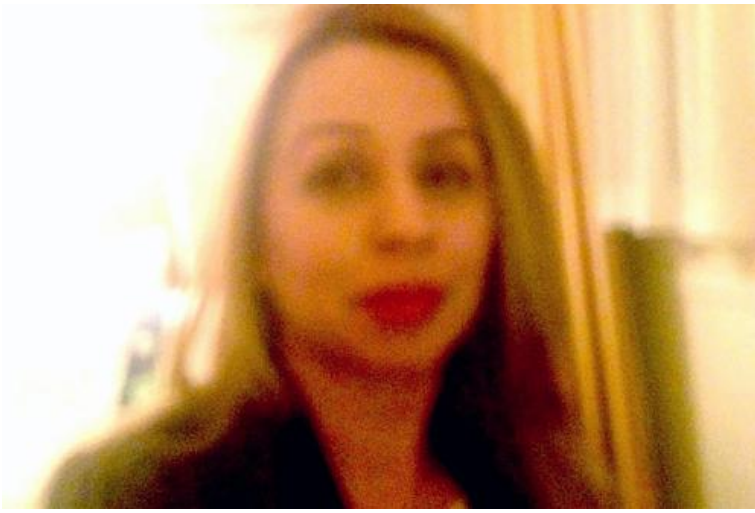
"I am alarmed that I had been sitting with a jihadi extremist who wants sharia law to take over this country, a misogynist," wrote Jan, who waived her right to anonymity. "He is a dangerous man; how many more like him are running these mosques or sharia courts that women who are escaping forced marriages and domestic violence have to use?"

"I recall that he tried to preach to me; it was patronising. I had to travel up to London twice to

see him for 'counselling or meeting'.

“He kept wasting my time, insisting I come to these counselling sessions even though I told him it was a forced, underage marriage.”

Choudary, 49, a former solicitor, was jailed for 5½ years in September for inviting support for Isis.



Habiba Jan accuses Anjem Choudary of misogyny

HABIBA JAAN

Counterterrorism chiefs believe that he and the banned groups that he helped to run, including al-Muhajiroun, radicalised young men and women, including the killers of Fusilier Lee Rigby, who was murdered in Woolwich, southeast London, in 2013.

In her testimony, Jan, a mother of four who works as a mental health care worker, says she was taken to Pakistan as a schoolgirl. When she was 15, she alleges she was forced to marry a man more than twice her age who “coerced” her into “performing my duties from my wedding night onwards”.

After escaping and taking advice from friends in the West Midlands, she says she travelled to a sharia court in London where Choudary was a judge. But despite detailing a “mentally abusive, coercive marriage”, she claims Choudary pressed her to try to make the marriage work.

Another alternative needs to be found to safeguard the rights, dignity and lives of Muslim women

Jan, who says her ordeal triggered a breakdown, wants the government to impose tighter controls on about 80 such courts running a shadowy parallel system of justice in Muslim communities. She secured her divorce only when her grandmother, who understood how to play the sharia system,

explained she could get a “quickie” written Islamic divorce if her husband agreed.

“It costs nothing; all you need is two witnesses and he drew up a paper and signed it,” Jan wrote in her evidence.

She told The Sunday Times: “I am worried about the future of Muslim women if sharia courts are going to be run by extremists or Islamists who believe in these practices . . . Another alternative needs to be found to safeguard the rights, dignity and lives of Muslim women from misogynist, male-dominated sharia organisations.”

Jan’s testimony was submitted to MPs by the campaign group One Law for All. Maryam Namazie, the group’s spokeswoman, said: “The evidence we have gathered clearly shows transnational Islamist links to sharia courts. The

government must ensure that principles of human rights and the rule of law are applicable to all British citizens.”

In written evidence to MPs, the Islamic Sharia Council said “allegations of Islamist links have been repeatedly made without a shred of evidence to corroborate them”. It added that sharia courts operate “within the law” and offer only “dispute resolution that is sensitive to the religious and cultural norms of their clientele”.

A spokesman for Choudary said his incarceration meant he could not be reached for comment.