[**Two trials in UK**](https://www.dawn.com/news/1677668/two-trials-in-uk)

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TWO recent trials of British Pakistanis in London have shown that as well as importing and exporting each other’s products and services, the UK and Pakistan also trade in violence and politics.

Both sets of legal proceedings took place in Kingston-on-Thames Crown Court in south London and both lasted two weeks. In the first, 31-year-old Muhammad Gohir Khan was [found guilty](https://www.dawn.com/news/1672027) of being hired to kill the Rotterdam-based, anti-military blogger, Ahmad Waqass Goraya.

The jury was [told](https://www.dawn.com/news/1671339) that Mr Khan, who was heavily in debt, jumped at the chance to earn £100,000 for carrying out the murder. As for the identity of the man who commissioned the killing, the court only heard that he was called MudZ and lived in Pakistan.

Muhammad Gohir Khan was only caught because of his incompetence. He failed to answer simple questions as he exited the Netherlands where he had been on a trial run. Thinking his manner odd, border officials there wondered if he were a jihadi and tipped off the British authorities that a terrorist suspect was heading to the UK. When the British authorities picked up Muhammad Gohir Khan and looked at his phone, they came to understand the nature of the plot.

Many may conclude that Britain is just as bad as Pakistan.

The second trial was of MQM London leader Altaf Hussain who was [found not guilty](https://www.dawn.com/news/1675337) of encouraging terrorism. His two-week trial concerned two of his 2016 speeches which were relayed live from the UK to Karachi. In one of them, Altaf Hussain asked his followers to go to the headquarters of some Pakistani TV channels he considered hostile. A transcript of one of the speeches quoted Hussain as saying: “Let’s see how many more of us they can kill, let them kill as many as they can in a day so we can be on jihad.”

Although he was cleared of encouraging terrorism, the fact remains that the TV stations were attacked. During the trial, the jury was told that in the past Mr Hussain had spoken of “meeting violence with violence” and a “total war for Muhajir rights” but to avoid prejudicing the case, many of the details of the MQM’s past activity were not discussed in front of the jury. Some of the jurors went to meet Altaf Hussain as he left the court premises, apparently seeing him more as a victim of human rights abuses rather than instigator of violence.

**Editorial:** [*UK court's verdict on Altaf Hussain is disconnected from the reality of Karachi's citizens*](https://www.dawn.com/news/1675541/altaf-hussains-acquittal)

In the first trial an unidentified person in Pakistan commissioned a Brit to carry out a murder in The Netherlands. In the second, someone in London was accused of encouraging violence in Pakistan. If these were purely criminal matters they would be of limited interest. But both had political elements.

In the Muhammad Gohir Khan trial, the intended victim had received information from the FBI in December 2018 that he was on a kill list as did some other liberal activists living in the UK. When asked about these threats, British officials made a point of issuing public comments — which they are normally reluctant to do.

Mark Lyall Grant, the former UK high commissioner to Pakistan and a former national security adviser to the prime minister, was dragged out of retirement to say: “If there is illegal pressure, in particular on journalists in the UK, then I would expect the law-enforcement agencies and the British government to take notice of that and to make an appropriate legal and/or diplomatic response.”

There was another indication that the British authorities wanted to use the Muhammad Gohir Khan trial to send a message to Pakistan. The generally unhelpful Crown Prosecution Service was unusually willing to brief UK-based journalists about the background to the trial, suggesting the British authorities wanted the trial covered in the press. When it came to the Altaf trial, however, the CPS reverted to its normal practice of being unhelpful and British officials made no comment.

The explanation is obvious enough. For the last two decades, the UK authorities have had many diplomatic and intelligence contacts with the MQM. Whenever Pakistanis complained to the British police about the MQM, they were ignored. Furthermore, Altaf only went on trial for political reasons — Prime Minister Imran Khan asked his counterpart Theresa May to prosecute and as if by magic the years of inaction came to an end and the legal wheels started turning.

No doubt many Pakistani nationalists keen to challenge Western assumptions about its moral superiority would look at these two trials and conclude that the UK is just as bad as Pakistan. There is, in fact, a slight difference — no one is suggesting the British state actually commissioned violence in Pakistan. But even with that qualification in mind, it’s fair to conclude that both the British and Pakistani states have shown that their perception of the national interest comes before their concern for victims of violence.

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