

OPUS2

Manchester Arena Inquiry

Day 173

November 25, 2021

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Thursday, 25 November 2021

1
2 (9.30 am)
3 (A restricted session was heard)
4 (11.00 am)
5 (Delay in proceedings)
6 (11.10 am)
7 MR GREANEY: Sir, the witness in the witness box is a person
8 you will recognise because he was last with us on
9 20 October, it is Mr Abdalraouf Abdallah, and I'm going
10 to ask that he be sworn, please.
11 MR ABDALRAOUF ABDALLAH (sworn)
12 Questions from MR GREANEY
13 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I think you've been told that if you
14 need a break at any time, please just tell me.
15 A. Thank you very much, yes.
16 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: We are aware of your health problems.
17 A. Thank you.
18 MR GREANEY: I'm going to begin by asking you to tell us,
19 please, your full name.
20 A. Abdalraouf Abdallah.
21 Q. Mr Abdallah, I'm just going to tell you as a matter of
22 formality that you are here giving evidence under
23 a notice that was issued to you on 20 October 2021 that
24 was issued under section 21(1)(a) of the Inquiries
25 Act 2005 and by which the chairman required you to give

1

1 oral evidence at this hearing today. So having said
2 that, we'll get on.
3 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Are you all right?
4 A. Yes.
5 MR GREANEY: So, Mr Abdallah, I'm going to begin by asking
6 you some questions about your background, and the reason
7 I'm asking you about these questions is because your
8 answers will be relevant to the influences that there
9 have been on you in the course of your life.
10 First of all, is your father a man called
11 Nagah Abdallah?
12 A. Yes, indeed.
13 Q. Is your father a person of Libyan heritage?
14 A. Yes.
15 Q. Is your mother called Samira Lalouche?
16 A. Mm—hm. Yes.
17 Q. Is she of Libyan heritage?
18 A. No.
19 Q. What is her heritage, may I ask?
20 A. Next door, Algerian, neighbour.
21 Q. Do you have a brother named Mohammed Abdallah?
22 A. Yes.
23 Q. Is he a little older than you?
24 A. He's older than me, yes.
25 Q. Are you close to him?

2

1 A. Yes.
2 Q. And have you been close to him throughout your adult
3 life?
4 A. Yes, we've always been close, yes.
5 Q. You've always been close. I believe, but you'll
6 confirm, that like you, he is currently imprisoned.
7 A. Yes.
8 Q. And in due course, I'm going to ask you a little bit
9 more about that.
10 Were you yourself born in Peshawar province in
11 Pakistan?
12 A. "Peshawar".
13 Q. "Peshawar", thank you very much, which I believe is
14 close to the border of Afghanistan; is that correct?
15 A. Pathan area, yes.
16 Q. Why was it that your family were living in that area
17 at the time of your birth, do you know?
18 A. Yes, as far as I recall, I don't remember, my dad was
19 involved in the honey business.
20 Q. In the honey business?
21 A. Yes, with my uncle that lives in Manchester.
22 Q. So your family were there for reasons connected with
23 your dad's work and business?
24 A. They were bringing honey and Pacific honey and they were
25 selling it here.

3

1 Q. But in due course, following your birth, did there come
2 a time when your immediate family moved to Libya, the
3 land of your father?
4 A. Moved back to Libya?
5 Q. Yes.
6 A. No, they came here as refugees. My dad couldn't go back
7 to Libya.
8 Q. This is just what I want to understand a little bit
9 about your background and to understand your connections
10 with Libya. Was there ever a time when you were younger
11 when you lived in Libya?
12 A. I've been to Libya many times, yes. I was visiting
13 family in summer and everything, my dad's siblings, my
14 cousins and everyone.
15 Q. I'm just going to check through the chairman that those
16 in the courtroom are all able to hear you.
17 A. Yes, I was going to ask. Is that ...
18 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Yes. No, that's good. Obviously you've
19 got some trouble with your voice at the moment, but
20 you're doing fine so far, thank you.
21 A. Yes.
22 MR GREANEY: I just want to be clear about this and then
23 we'll move on to other connected matters. So you were
24 born in Pakistan, as you've explained to us. Was the
25 next place that you lived in the UK or was there

4

1 a period when you lived permanently in Libya?
 2 A. Straightaway to Manchester.
 3 Q. Okay.
 4 A. And since then, it's been my home town.
 5 Q. I think you said to us that your family were seeking
 6 asylum in the UK, is that correct?
 7 A. Yes.
 8 Q. Was that because your father was in political opposition
 9 to Gaddafi?
 10 A. As far as I know, my dad was one of the people, as many
 11 of Libyans, who fed Libya because they were against what
 12 the dictator Gaddafi was doing in his regime, and their
 13 life was under threat because they were asking for their
 14 rights and the rights for the people.
 15 Q. So that's a very clear answer, and what it comes to,
 16 I think, is that your father was in opposition to
 17 Gaddafi and because of that, he was under threat in
 18 Libya and so sought asylum in the UK.
 19 A. Yes.
 20 Q. Were other relatives of yours also in opposition to
 21 Gaddafi?
 22 A. Unfortunately, yes, and he was killed.
 23 Q. And I was going to ask you about that. I'm sure it was
 24 a terrible time in your family's lives, but you had
 25 an uncle who, as we've understood it, was murdered

5

1 whilst a prisoner of the Gaddafi regime in 1996?
 2 A. Yes, it was a — a story came out afterwards, as
 3 I've just explained to the people, how horrific Gaddafi
 4 was. He killed nearly 1,300 people nearly in two hours
 5 in a prison called Abu Salim and my uncle, he was part
 6 of those people who got killed.
 7 Q. So your understanding was that Gaddafi's forces
 8 effectively wiped out the entire population of a prison?
 9 A. Yes. "If you're not with me, you're against me", and
 10 they will shoot you.
 11 Q. So would it be fair to say that you grew up in
 12 a household and in an environment that was fiercely
 13 anti-Gaddafi?
 14 A. Yes. As I grew up, growing, I started understanding, as
 15 I was asking my father and everything.
 16 Q. Was your father, and was your uncle, a member, members,
 17 of any particular group within Libya?
 18 A. Not really. They — it was just people who were — as
 19 you can — just same as here when people come out and
 20 protest, but this is a free country where you can come
 21 out and protest and ask for your rights. Over there, it
 22 was different. If you come out, then they were just
 23 getting chased and getting killed and everything. So it
 24 wasn't a particular group or anything. They were just
 25 normal people just asking for their rights and freedom,

6

1 basically, and how to live their life.
 2 Q. In the inquiry, as you'll probably know, we have heard
 3 about a group called the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group,
 4 often referred to as the LIFG. Have you heard of that
 5 group?
 6 A. To be honest, the first time I've heard of that
 7 particular word, LIFG, is when the papers were given to
 8 me and then my solicitors explained to me that was
 9 a group, basically, in the 90s — it's not part of my
 10 generation and I don't really know that much about it
 11 and everything.
 12 Q. It may well be accurate to say it's not part of your
 13 generation, but it would certainly have been part of
 14 your father and uncle's generation.
 15 A. Yes.
 16 Q. So are you able to say whether or not your father and/or
 17 your uncle had been members of the LIFG?
 18 A. No, they weren't. They weren't with the LIFG or
 19 anything like that. As its name — it's called in
 20 Arabic Jama'a al-Muqatilah. There's a lot — well,
 21 I know that we don't know, me and my generation, we
 22 don't really know that much about it and everything.
 23 All we know, that our fathers just ran away from Gaddafi
 24 and asked for asylum in this country and were thankful
 25 for that, that the UK opened their arms for us and for

7

1 us to get a good life and grow up in it.
 2 Q. Growing up within the Libyan community in
 3 South Manchester, as you're going to tell us about in
 4 a moment, was there not discussion about the LIFG and
 5 its activities?
 6 A. Not really. Me and my boys, we were just growing up as
 7 young boys, you know, just football, gym, having fun,
 8 this and that. We don't really talk about groups or
 9 anything like that or what's going on particularly in
 10 Libya or anything like that.
 11 Q. Do you remember that it was ever the case that your
 12 father spoke to other older members of the community
 13 about the LIFG and its activities?
 14 A. Not really.
 15 Q. From what you do know of the LIFG, do you understand
 16 that it has associations with Al-Qaeda?
 17 A. Not really. When — the time that I've known about LIFG
 18 more is actually when the revolution kicked off.
 19 Q. So you're talking about 2011 —
 20 A. Yes.
 21 Q. — when there was the uprising. And how old would
 22 you have been in 2011?
 23 A. Well, I was 17.
 24 Q. And obviously I'm going to ask you about the time that
 25 you spent in Libya around that time.

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1 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I'm really sorry, I just missed
 2 something you said. Were you saying the times you've
 3 known about the LIFG was in 2011 or was it Al-Qaeda you
 4 were mentioning?
 5 MR GREANEY: LIFG.
 6 A. LIFG. I've known more about it afterwards, when the
 7 revolution kicked off, and as far as I know, that is
 8 actually — it's not a terrorist group and it's got
 9 nothing to do with extremism in this country.
 10 Q. I'm going to come back to that in due course when I ask
 11 you about your own experiences in Libya, but let's just
 12 finish off what I was asking you about your personal
 13 background.
 14 Was it in the early 1990s that you and your family
 15 moved to the United Kingdom?
 16 A. 93, yes, when I was born.
 17 Q. 93. Did your family settle in South Manchester?
 18 A. Yes.
 19 Q. Did you grow up in that area?
 20 A. All my life, yes.
 21 Q. All your life.
 22 We've heard evidence that within South Manchester,
 23 there's a strong Libyan community. Do you agree with
 24 that?
 25 A. Yes.

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1 Q. As you were growing up, was that Libyan community
 2 predominantly anti-Gaddafi or was there a fairly equal
 3 mix of pro and anti-Gaddafi supporters?
 4 A. I think there was both. There were a lot of
 5 anti-Gaddafi, basically, who ran away for their life and
 6 for the families, and there was also — probably there
 7 was supporters as well.
 8 Q. So there were some supporters of Gaddafi, but there were
 9 also many people who had run away from the Gaddafi
 10 regime —
 11 A. Yes.
 12 Q. — because of the threat it posed to them. Then were
 13 there more people who were anti-Gaddafi than were
 14 supporters of Gaddafi, would you say?
 15 A. Yes. I mean, that's why — the reason we came here for
 16 asylum.
 17 Q. As you were growing up, did your family, the Abdallah
 18 family, know the Abedi family, who had also settled
 19 in the 1990s in South Manchester?
 20 A. Yes. We're family friends. We grew up together as
 21 well, as many other — all of my friends and in the
 22 statement and in the question that — they've been
 23 named. We all grow up together and we would — we've
 24 known each other since we're babies, basically.
 25 Q. This is one of the things that obviously the inquiry is

10

1 keen to know from you. Was your father a friend of
 2 Ramadan Abedi, the father of Salman, Ismail and Hashem?
 3 A. Yes, sir.
 4 Q. And so far as you know or understand, was Ramadan Abedi
 5 associated with the LIFG?
 6 A. No.
 7 Q. So do you mean that he wasn't or that you don't know
 8 one way or the other?
 9 A. He wasn't as far as I know. As far as I know now,
 10 he wasn't a member of LIFG at all.
 11 Q. And so far as you know or understand, was he associated
 12 with Ansar al-Sharia?
 13 A. Ansar al-Sharia?
 14 Q. Yes, a terrorist organisation that was active in
 15 particular in Benghazi.
 16 A. No.
 17 Q. Have you heard of that organisation?
 18 A. Yes. I don't recall it that much because that — after
 19 my injury, I was very busy in hospital and rehab and —
 20 so I don't remember he was particularly of any group.
 21 He was part of the 17th February Brigade.
 22 Q. Who was?
 23 A. Mr Ramadan.
 24 Q. So Ramadan Abedi was part of the 17th February
 25 Martyrs Brigade?

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1 A. 17th February Brigade, yes.
 2 Q. Are you quibbling with my description, which
 3 I understand to be the conventional one, which is that
 4 that brigade, which fought in the civil war, was known
 5 as the 17th February Martyrs Brigade?
 6 A. Yes, 17th — well, the name is — in Arabic is the
 7 Brigade of 17th February, [Arabic spoken], and that's
 8 the name of it.
 9 Q. That's Ramadan Abedi. It's clear from what you've said
 10 that you also knew Ismail Abedi; is that correct?
 11 A. Yes.
 12 Q. And you'd known him from the time you were tiny?
 13 A. Yes.
 14 Q. Was he about the same age as you, or younger or older?
 15 A. I'd say same age.
 16 Q. What was the nature of your relationship with him? Were
 17 you good friends with him?
 18 A. We were good — yes, we were good friends, yes. We went
 19 to same school together, Arabic school, and just little
 20 kids growing up, having fun and everything.
 21 Q. Even after you had suffered your injury in the conflict
 22 and had returned to Manchester, did you maintain your
 23 contact with him, Ismail Abedi?
 24 A. Yes, he was a close friend and as everyone knows, as
 25 every other close friend of mine that's been mentioned

12

1 in the questions, in our culture, basically, because
 2 I'm injured and after I came out of rehab, everyone was
 3 coming and seeing me, visiting, comforting me and
 4 everything until my house got adapted and everything.
 5 Q. What the inquiry knows is that by 2015, Ismail Abedi
 6 appears to have developed, to say the least, a strong
 7 interest in Islamic State. Did you become aware that he
 8 had developed that interest?
 9 A. Not really. At that time, Ismail was -- got married and
 10 had a child and he was busy with his life.
 11 Q. On the occasions that you met him around that time, did
 12 you discuss with him the politics of Libya or Syria?
 13 A. Although it was normal, natural, to talk about Libya,
 14 even after Gaddafi's fall and everything. We talked
 15 about it every now and then, and it was natural even to
 16 the uncles in Manchester and everything, what's going on
 17 in Libya and what's going to happen next and everything.
 18 Q. Did you talk to Ismail Abedi about what was happening in
 19 Syria by 2015, the rise of Islamic State, the
 20 declaration of the caliphate and so on?
 21 A. I mean, before even the rise of Islamic State or
 22 anything like that, we were interested in Syria from
 23 day one. As I explained to people and to the inquiry,
 24 the fact is after the Gaddafi forces -- after Gaddafi
 25 died and his forces were basically fleeing the country

13

1 and everything, the rebel government revolution
 2 basically established in Libya, decided as Assad was
 3 killing his people straightaway, as what Gaddafi did,
 4 as -- we came out peacefully protesting. Just to give
 5 the inquiry more information, we started peacefully,
 6 same as in Syria, but as Assad started killing his
 7 people, Gaddafi -- I mean, the Libyan revolution and the
 8 people in charge in the government at the time, that was
 9 the -- decided to go to Syria voluntarily with weapons
 10 and money and voluntarily fight just to help the Syrians
 11 against dictator regime.
 12 Q. I do want to ask you about this in due course. There's
 13 a particular structure I want to apply to my
 14 questioning. But I entirely understand that there came
 15 a time when groups of Libyan fighters moved from Libya
 16 to Syria and engaged in the fight against Assad there,
 17 didn't they?
 18 A. That was actually from day one, as soon as Gaddafi's
 19 fall down, everything. We, as Libyans, and the
 20 government in Libya -- decided, as I said, to go there
 21 with money, weapons, assist them with anything they can,
 22 and voluntarily people went to fight and to help
 23 Syrians. And we were the first country to even get
 24 Syrians and to get them, basically, refugees in our
 25 countries -- in our country in Libya and give them jobs

14

1 and take care of them.
 2 Q. So bearing in mind your own experiences in Libya, we can
 3 well understand that you would have had a particular
 4 interest in what was happening in Syria from day one,
 5 and did you discuss that with Ismail Abedi?
 6 A. Ismail Abedi was very busy, was working. As he was
 7 married, he was working, providing for his family. But
 8 in terms of talking about Syria, it was normal in the
 9 Arab world and in Manchester. It was on Al Jazeera all
 10 the time, everywhere, wherever you go; in a mosque,
 11 wherever you go, in parties, wherever, everybody's
 12 talking about what's going on, what's the --
 13 interested -- it's our land and our country and we were
 14 just interested in what's going on and what's happening
 15 there and what's the progress and everything, as
 16 I've been through it myself in Libya.
 17 Q. I'm going to ask you about that, and it's entirely
 18 understandable that people would have been talking about
 19 it. But do you remember Ismail Abedi, during this
 20 period in 2015, expressing extremist ideas about Syria?
 21 A. Not really. I wasn't seeing him a lot, Ismail, because
 22 he was working. I was mostly with other people who were
 23 living near me.
 24 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: When you're talking about extremist
 25 ideas, are you talking about people talking about going

15

1 out to Syria to fight against Assad?
 2 MR GREANEY: I'm talking about the expression of violent
 3 Islamist extremist ideas.
 4 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay.
 5 MR GREANEY: I hope that's what you understood I was asking
 6 you about.
 7 A. In 2015?
 8 Q. Yes. Was Ismail Abedi expressing to you violent
 9 Islamist extremist ideas?
 10 A. Not really, to be honest.
 11 Q. So when I use the term "extremist", as I will do
 12 a number of times, that's what I'll be meaning. Do you
 13 understand what I mean by violent Islamist extremist
 14 ideology?
 15 A. Yes, I do. Just if you have a clearer phrase so
 16 I can --
 17 Q. Of course. I'm talking about the ideology of groups
 18 like Islamic State, the ideology of groups like
 19 Al-Qaeda, the ideology of groups like Ansar al-Sharia;
 20 the idea that there are true Muslims, on the one hand,
 21 and, on the other hand, there are bad Muslims and there
 22 are non-Muslims and the two shouldn't mix and violence
 23 against the kuffar is acceptable. That's what I am
 24 talking about when I refer to violent Islamist
 25 extremism.

16

1 A. Thank you. That's my understanding of your question,
 2 yes.
 3 Q. That's yours too.
 4 A. It was a cocktail at the time, anyway, Syria.
 5 Q. So I've asked you about Ramadan and Ismail and I'm still
 6 dealing with your background. Could I ask you next
 7 about Salman Abedi. Was he a little younger than you?
 8 A. He's a little younger than me, yes.
 9 Q. But did you know him from essentially the time of his
 10 birth?
 11 A. Yes.
 12 Q. And was he a friend of yours?
 13 A. Yes, he was. He was part of my circle, group, similar
 14 age.
 15 Q. Do you recall any time during which Salman Abedi
 16 expressed extremist ideas?
 17 A. Not really at all.
 18 Q. Did you discuss Syria and the Arab Spring with him?
 19 A. Yes, we talked about Syria and Libya, as everyone else
 20 was doing, and so was all of my friends as well. We
 21 talk about it every now and again.
 22 Q. When you spoke to Salman Abedi about those things, what
 23 kind of ideas and attitudes was he expressing?
 24 A. We were just talking about the progress of Libya at the
 25 time and the fight was happening and also what was going

17

1 on in Syria, what was really happening and everything.
 2 We didn't understand that much and we tried to clarify
 3 our understanding more, what's going on, because there
 4 was -- as you said, there was -- a lot of groups were
 5 just popping out of nowhere and, basically, we were just
 6 trying to understand who was that group? Which group
 7 is that? What's the ideology? What's their belief, and
 8 et cetera?
 9 Q. Finally, before we move on to a different topic,
 10 Hashem Abedi. He was younger than you, but, again, was
 11 someone that you had known since he was born; is that
 12 correct?
 13 A. Yes. Hashem was -- Hashem was very young. He's not
 14 part of our circle. He chilled with his generation.
 15 He's always been like a kid to me and I just see him,
 16 like, every now and again.
 17 Q. So he was not someone that you associated with
 18 particularly?
 19 A. Not really.
 20 Q. Next, Mr Abdallah, I'm going to ask you about your
 21 religion. We've understood that you were brought up
 22 in the Muslim faith; is that correct?
 23 A. Yes.
 24 Q. Have you remained a member of that faith throughout your
 25 entire life until this day?

18

1 A. I've been a Muslim, yes, all my life, yes. And when
 2 I was a teenager, I wasn't really praying or anything
 3 like that, but just a little kid that was having fun,
 4 you know, girls and everything and high school and all
 5 that. But as I've grown up, I started learning,
 6 understanding more about my religion.
 7 Q. As you've moved from childhood into adulthood, have you
 8 become more devout in your religion?
 9 A. Meaning?
 10 Q. Meaning more serious about your religion and more
 11 observant.
 12 A. I would say I took it -- I was practising it honestly
 13 from my heart, because when I was a kid, younger as
 14 teenager, I wasn't really praying and my mum was always
 15 telling me to pray and obviously we had to listen to our
 16 mothers. We're not disrespectful to them, you know what
 17 I mean? But as I grew up more and everything,
 18 I understood more about my religion and I was practising
 19 it from my own will, honestly.
 20 Q. As part of practising your religion in the period before
 21 you were imprisoned in July of 2016, did you regularly
 22 attend a mosque or mosques?
 23 A. Before -- before what? Say that again.
 24 Q. We know that in July of 2016, you were sent to prison
 25 after you'd been convicted of terrorism offences.

19

1 A. Yes.
 2 Q. And before that, for a period, you were on bail.
 3 A. Yes.
 4 Q. And before that, you were on remand for a short period,
 5 and before that, you were free within South Manchester.
 6 And during those periods before you were sent to jail,
 7 did you attend a mosque or mosques?
 8 A. Yes, I mean, where I lived, there's like five mosques
 9 next to me and they're not -- they're like five minutes
 10 away or the furthest one is like 10 minutes away.
 11 Q. Did you attend ever the Manchester Islamic Centre, often
 12 known as Didsbury Mosque?
 13 A. That was -- that was, like, when I was a kid only.
 14 Q. I'm mainly interested in the period from 2011 when you
 15 returned injured from Germany --
 16 A. Yes, it's far away from my house. I only -- I was
 17 more -- I did attend it, but that was when we were kids,
 18 basically, like under 10 years old.
 19 Q. As an adult, did your brother Mohammed Abdallah attend
 20 Didsbury Mosque, do you know?
 21 A. No. He wasn't going to any mosques.
 22 Q. What about the Al-Furqan mosque? Was that a mosque that
 23 you attended in that period, 2011 to 2016?
 24 A. Not really. I can't get there anyway. It's got stairs,
 25 steps, stairs and everything. So I just -- I'll go to

20

1 the mosque next to me, which is ground floor.
 2 Q. I'm going to ask you next about your views on religion.
 3 The inquiry has heard about a concept within Islam known
 4 as Salafism. What does that term, Salafism, mean to
 5 you?
 6 A. The term -- it's actually called salaf--e--saliheen(?),
 7 which means the pious Salaf, the people who are Muslims
 8 in the past who were practising their religion. It
 9 comes from Salaf, which means the ones on the straight
 10 path, and this is what it means, basically. It was
 11 associated from the companions after the Prophet's,
 12 peace be upon him, death and continued.
 13 Q. Is it fair, in your opinion, to describe it as
 14 a particularly strict form of Islam?
 15 A. Strict?
 16 Q. Yes, or fundamental.
 17 A. It's -- I would not say strict, if you really understand
 18 the ideology and everything, because ... not the Salaf
 19 that people claim to be Salaf now, which changed in the
 20 concepts and everything and they act up on their own
 21 will and they call themselves whatever they want to call
 22 themselves.
 23 Q. I think you're probably referring to the fact that
 24 Islamic State is generally regarded as a Salafi
 25 organisation, isn't it?

21

1 A. Well, they regard themselves more than Salaf; they
 2 regard themselves as probably chosen by God, actually,
 3 or prophets, whatever they call themselves.
 4 Q. Do you regard yourself as a Salafist?
 5 A. To be honest, I just regard myself as a -- just a Muslim
 6 like my Prophet, peace be upon him, was at the time;
 7 just a Muslim practising his five pillars as much as he
 8 can.
 9 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: "Five prayers as much as he can"?
 10 A. Five prayers, yes. I said "five pillars", but --
 11 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I'm so sorry.
 12 A. Which is, Islam knows, believing in God and Prophet,
 13 fasting and praying and everything. But the
 14 five prayers, yes.
 15 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.
 16 MR GREANEY: Are you, would you say, sympathetic to the
 17 ideas of Salafism?
 18 A. I mean, you haven't clarified what ideas they are.
 19 Q. What I mean is the idea that a Muslim should practice
 20 the form of Islam that was in existence much nearer to
 21 the time of Prophet Mohammed, so a strict and older form
 22 of Islam. Do you agree with that?
 23 A. Actually, just to clarify that, my Prophet, peace be
 24 upon him, he wasn't strict. That's very -- I mean,
 25 I find it insulting that you're saying that, to be

22

1 honest --
 2 Q. Well, I don't wish to insult you.
 3 A. -- basically. And my Prophet was a peaceful man,
 4 actually, and he was sent to spread peacefulness on
 5 earth and he didn't have no extreme ideology or anything
 6 like that.
 7 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay. I think we've heard that and we
 8 do accept that.
 9 A. Nowadays --
 10 MR GREANEY: Can I just make sure you understand my
 11 question, which I believe you do understand, which is
 12 everyone knows what Salafism is. Everyone knows it's
 13 associated with Islamic State. I'm asking you a simple
 14 question, which is: are you sympathetic to the ideas of
 15 Salafism?
 16 A. No. You're asking me, "Are you sympathetic with ISIS?"
 17 Q. No, I haven't reached that stage yet. I'm asking you
 18 whether you have sympathy with the concept of Salafism.
 19 A. I don't have any sympathy with anyone who claims, which
 20 is not -- he is, actually. As I said to you, again, the
 21 word Salaf, it comes from back in the day and there were
 22 people just practising their religion and pious people
 23 and scholars of Islam. Nowadays it's different.
 24 Q. I'm going to move on. We've got at least a flavour of
 25 your answer.

23

1 We heard from Dr Wilkinson, an expert in the matters
 2 that we are currently discussing, that there is a form
 3 of extreme Islamist thinking which involves, as
 4 I've discussed with you already, the theory that there
 5 are them and there are us, so true Muslims on the one
 6 hand and non or wrong Muslims on the other. Is that
 7 a concept that you agree with, the concept of them and
 8 us?
 9 A. Do I agree with that or do I agree with Dr Wilkinson?
 10 Q. Do you subscribe to, do you agree with, the world view
 11 that, on the one hand, there are true Muslims; on the
 12 other hand, there are non--and wrong Muslims, the kuffar,
 13 who should be shunned?
 14 A. Not really. I do not agree with that at all. And to
 15 give you more explanation why -- of an extreme group,
 16 which is -- the real term in Arabic is called
 17 "hawari" (?), and the Prophet, peace be upon him, told us
 18 about that and taught us about those people, and
 19 I believe they even came out in 80s and 90s as well,
 20 which everyone to them is a disbeliever. I'm myself
 21 a disbeliever to them, and everyone should be killed.
 22 They believe, basically, they are the right people.
 23 Q. Yes.
 24 A. And the Prophet, peace be upon him, warned us about them
 25 and he actually described them, they are the dogs of

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1 Hellfire .
 2 Q. We heard that term yesterday.
 3 Is it your position that your approach to your
 4 religion is mainstream?
 5 A. Sorry, say that -- meaning?
 6 Q. I'm sure you'll understand that within Islam, as no
 7 doubt within other religions, there is a spectrum, and
 8 Dr Wilkinson described it to us. We have, at one end,
 9 mainstream Islam and at the other hand, at the other end
 10 of the spectrum, we have violent Islamist extremist
 11 ideology, the ideology of Islamic State. Where are you
 12 on that spectrum, I suppose, is the question?
 13 A. My -- yes, I do agree with Dr Wilkinson, with his
 14 report, yes, he's right. The fact is Muslims are
 15 Muslims if they believe in Islam and they choose to be
 16 Muslims. Whoever becomes Muslim, that's between him and
 17 God and for no one else to judge. As human beings and
 18 as Muslims, we can't judge who is Muslim and who's not.
 19 Secondly, if you're talking about ISIS and the
 20 violent -- they are actually, as I said, hawaris(?), as
 21 the Prophet, peace be upon him, warned us about. They
 22 are, as we know -- everyone to them should be dead if
 23 they're -- if you're not part of them.
 24 Q. So let me just attempt one more time and then I will
 25 move on, because obviously it's important your evidence

1 should conclude today.
 2 You are plainly familiar with the evidence of
 3 Dr Wilkinson about the spectrum that exists within
 4 Islam, with mainstream Islam at one end of the spectrum
 5 and violent Islamist extremism at the other end. Where
 6 are you on that spectrum, Mr Abdallah?
 7 A. I'm just ... I'm just a normal Islamic Muslim person who
 8 lives in the west, basically. And the other part, to be
 9 honest, I don't even want to call them even like
 10 Muslims, to be honest. A lot of Muslims, actually,
 11 don't even want to call them Muslims because they claim
 12 to be something that they are not and they are using our
 13 religion to make it look bad and to -- they already did
 14 and they made the world hate the term and the religion
 15 Islam itself because of their actions and what their
 16 ideology is.
 17 As I know right now, and I know much better about
 18 them, it's nothing to do with Islam, actually. It's
 19 their own views and their own ideology from their own
 20 heads or from their own devilness, what they're doing,
 21 and then they claim to be Muslim, and that's what
 22 Islamists are saying. And the Koran and the Prophet,
 23 peace be upon him, how do you say this, does not say or
 24 assist or anything, or agrees with anything they do at
 25 all, actually.

1 Q. Mr Abdallah, we've heard about jihad during the course
 2 of the inquiry and we understand that that's able to
 3 describe different things. One of the things that it's
 4 able to describe is armed or violent jihad. Are you
 5 a supporter of armed jihad?
 6 A. Actually, just to explain, to explain the term of
 7 "jihad", what is it for people, because a lot of people,
 8 when they hear the word "jihad", they think terrorism,
 9 violent --
 10 Q. They do, and they're wrong to think that, we know.
 11 A. The word "jihad" means, actually, in Arabic "struggle",
 12 first thing. And there's many types of jihad, actually.
 13 There is jihad which is against yourself, means against
 14 the desires and everything.
 15 Q. I'm going to ask you to pause for a minute because it's
 16 interesting that you describe these concepts to us, but
 17 we do understand them and I'm asking you --
 18 A. I'm coming to that, actually, right now.
 19 Q. Just do so, please.
 20 A. The reason being, I'm just talking, just explaining to
 21 people and to the nation as well, as they're watching,
 22 because this is my religion and I want people to
 23 understand it more, what is Islam is, not what they just
 24 heard from the news or what other people do and claim to
 25 be Muslims, and that's why I was giving the

1 definition --
 2 Q. You answer the question in the way in which you wish,
 3 then.
 4 A. Basically, there is a jihad called jihad, which is using
 5 armed jihad, basically, and it's not extreme or anything
 6 like that. It's actually called in Arabic jihad defa'i,
 7 which means self-defending jihad, and that jihad was
 8 talking about war, basically; just exactly what happened
 9 to us in Libya. That is actually jihad and it was
 10 a self-defend jihad against the Gaddafi dictator.
 11 And same for Syria. What happened, the people came
 12 out peacefully and protesting. As he was killing them
 13 and killing them, they didn't still want to fight, but
 14 they had to, and forced, so Islamically it's called
 15 jihad defa'i. You're allowed to defend yourself using
 16 arms. Jihad -- just exactly what happened at the
 17 Prophet's, peace be upon him, time when he had to defend
 18 himself when he went to Mecca -- when he went to Medina
 19 and he became stronger.
 20 Q. So within those terms that you've described, your view
 21 is that armed jihad may be acceptable in particular
 22 circumstances?
 23 A. Yes. It's acceptable by the Islamic scholars and in the
 24 Koran and the prophecies and by the hadith of the
 25 authentics, which is al-Bukhari, a Muslim (inaudible),

1 and no scholar actually disagrees or — with this term
 2 of the jihad of defence in circumstances where you have
 3 to defend yourself, where the fight is happening against
 4 you. It's just an example, like, ie Libya or Syria.
 5 Q. So a way of testing where you are on the spectrum may be
 6 to ask you a very direct question, and so I'll do so and
 7 seek a direct answer.
 8 Do you believe that suicide attacks may be
 9 a legitimate tactic in the course of armed jihad?
 10 A. No. That's actually — as you said, the word "suicide"
 11 itself, it's actually — I don't agree with it and it's
 12 actually not ... as a human being, it's mad to do that,
 13 actually, kill yourself. It's forbidden in Islam.
 14 Clearly in the Koran it says that, forbidden in Islam,
 15 and that's just killing yourself.
 16 And using it as an armed jihad actually is worse,
 17 because you are killing other people who are innocent
 18 with you. So that's got nothing to do with self-defence
 19 or anything like that or anything to do with jihad.
 20 Itself, the name of it, is called suicide.
 21 Q. Do you support, Mr Abdallah, the idea of democracy?
 22 A. Democracy?
 23 Q. Yes.
 24 A. I'm a Muslim, I believe in Islam, and there's a lot of
 25 things in democracy that, actually, I do believe in it

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1 and accept it.
 2 Q. Is it your wish that there should be, in general
 3 terms — I'm not talking about IS — is it your wish
 4 that there should be an Islamic state?
 5 A. There should be an Islamic state. The fact is
 6 Saudi Arabia is an Islamic state itself and that is
 7 the — probably the closest to the Islamic state we have
 8 in our days and generation from the Prophet — as the
 9 Prophet's, peace be upon him, time.
 10 MR GREANEY: I'm going to move on next, sir, to deal with
 11 the witness' experience of the conflict in Libya.
 12 We have been going for just 45 minutes. It may be that
 13 we should ask the witness whether he is content to go on
 14 for a little longer or it may be that we'll take the
 15 decision and we'll turn to ... Mr Menon thinks we're
 16 fine to carry on.
 17 MR MENON: I was saying you can ask him.
 18 MR GREANEY: Oh, "You can ask him".
 19 Would you like a break?
 20 A. I can continue for just a little bit longer, yes.
 21 Q. Let's carry on and we won't, I suggest, go on for longer
 22 than an hour. It's important that you should recognise
 23 that you're being treated fairly.
 24 A. Really, thank you for that, and thank you for taking it
 25 into consideration as well.

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1 Q. I'm going to ask you about your experiences, which
 2 you've mentioned already, of the conflict in Libya.
 3 In 2010, did you travel to Libya and stay with
 4 relatives there?
 5 A. Yes, I took a gap year from college and I stayed in
 6 Libya for about over a year.
 7 Q. What were you doing whilst you were there, before the
 8 uprising?
 9 A. What I was doing, I was chilling with my family; you
 10 know, beaches, picnics, going out, just having fun. And
 11 as I was there, I took — because I took a gap year from
 12 college, I actually had a plan. I was planning for my
 13 life as what I'm going to do when I come back here.
 14 Q. So you were taking a break from education and enjoying
 15 time with your family in your father's homeland, Libya.
 16 Given the period that you were there for, were you
 17 present in Libya when the uprising began in February of
 18 2011?
 19 A. Yes.
 20 Q. Whereabouts in Libya were you?
 21 A. In Tripoli.
 22 Q. In Tripoli. Is that where your family were, Tripoli?
 23 A. Yes, they live in Tripoli, yes, on the outskirts of it as
 24 well.
 25 Q. I'm just going to ask you to describe in a few

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1 sentences, if you can, what it was like within Libya
 2 when the uprising started on 17 February.
 3 A. What was it like?
 4 Q. What was it like? What was your experience like when
 5 the Arab Spring took hold in Libya?
 6 A. I mean, it's very hard to put it in words.
 7 Q. Was it an exciting time?
 8 A. It was a very horrific, scary, unimaginable, unthinkable
 9 of that experience that I had in Libya.
 10 Q. You had grown up in an anti-Gaddafi environment and were
 11 your own attitudes anti-Gaddafi?
 12 A. I was against — I was against, basically, his beliefs
 13 and I was against what he was doing, basically, for
 14 43 years, to explain to people who know Gaddafi, as the
 15 whole world knows who Gaddafi was; a dictator who was
 16 killing us, raping our daughters, wives, and we were
 17 living in a scary country, basically, like, and his
 18 secret police, basically, and it's, like, everybody was
 19 scared and everything.
 20 Q. And many sensible people would agree with that, but what
 21 I would like you to help us with is when the uprising
 22 started in February 2011, did you see this as
 23 an opportunity, as in fact then happened, for Gaddafi to
 24 be toppled?
 25 A. To explain that, yes, in other words. As it started in

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1 Tunisia, as everybody know, and then it travelled in
 2 other Arabic countries and then it happened in Egypt
 3 next door to us, and there was, basically, people were
 4 protesting and they're getting rid of regimes we were
 5 living under for years and years, the dictatorship.
 6 The Libyans actually took that chance that we could
 7 free ourselves from him, and that's how it started,
 8 basically, before 17 February, and then there were talks
 9 in Libya everywhere, how people wanted to come out and
 10 everything, and it was like a dream to come out and
 11 protest against Gaddafi, to ask for our rights and
 12 freedom.
 13 Q. As a result, did you join the forces that were building
 14 up against Gaddafi?
 15 A. Yes, I did. And to continue the answer about what
 16 happened to Libya, as I was in Tripoli, when Benghazi
 17 already started and kicked off and everything against
 18 Gaddafi, no more fighting, no more killing, no more
 19 this, we were in Tripoli in the middle of town, as we
 20 can say, we could call it Piccadilly in Manchester here,
 21 the square, which is now called the Martyrs' Square.
 22 Q. And one of your friends was killed alongside you?
 23 A. Yes. Actually, it was called Green Square when Gaddafi
 24 was there. We came out protesting normally, all --
 25 I know what protest is, as I've been in London back

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1 in the day when I was a kid with my father and all that
 2 about what's going on (inaudible) and all that. But
 3 when we came out protesting, it was horrific. Gaddafi
 4 was just -- and his forces were just spraying us with
 5 bullets. I'd never been shot at before. I never, like,
 6 heard anti-aircraft in my life. They were using
 7 anti-aircraft against human beings and that was
 8 happening and that's what I was seeing. It was people
 9 getting minced, brains out.
 10 Q. We have heard about this in the medical reports about
 11 you and in the evidence that you gave at your own trial,
 12 and we do know that one of your friends was killed
 13 alongside you, and no one will doubt that that must have
 14 been a terrible event. Did what happened to you and
 15 your friend on that occasion make you very angry?
 16 A. Of course. It was normal. Normal, actually.
 17 Q. As a result, did you join the, my term, 17th February
 18 Martyrs Brigade, your term 17th February Brigade. Did
 19 you join that armed militia?
 20 A. We had to run away from Tripoli, yes, and pretend to be
 21 Gaddafi's -- fond of Gaddafi by putting green flags in
 22 our cars. We came out --
 23 Q. Mr Abdallah, did you join that armed militia?
 24 A. I'm explaining to you, again --
 25 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Mr Abdallah, forgive me. You're being

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1 asked to focus on particular bits because obviously we
 2 don't want you to be here forever having to give
 3 evidence. So I think we've all -- we have read and
 4 I have read, and I'm the person who matters, about you
 5 having to have a green flag in your car in order to
 6 escape from the country by pretending to support
 7 Gaddafi. And now, after you managed to get away, you
 8 eventually came back, and then, as I understand it, you
 9 did join the forces, whatever we're going to call them,
 10 against Gaddafi.
 11 A. Yes, I did join. It was called -- it's called [Arabic
 12 spoken], the Tripoli Brigade. That was my brigade.
 13 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay, thank you.
 14 MR GREANEY: Was that part of or associated with the
 15 17th February Martyrs Brigade or 17th February Brigade?
 16 A. Yes. Just to clarify, it wasn't a militia group or
 17 anything.
 18 Q. What was it then?
 19 A. It's not militia or ... it was just a --
 20 Q. An armed group?
 21 A. Armed group, civilians, basically, and they were all
 22 people, normal people, from homes and streets and
 23 everything.
 24 Q. It was a group that had taken up arms to fight against
 25 Gaddafi?

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1 A. Yes, indeed. We had to. We were forced to, as we were
 2 backed up by the whole world and we were fighting and
 3 NATO fighting actually with us, or alongside with us, as
 4 the British Government also.
 5 Q. Was your brigade led by a man called Mahdi al-Harati?
 6 A. Yes, indeed.
 7 Q. Was he your leader as a member of that brigade?
 8 A. Yes.
 9 Q. Did he subsequently lead a group from Libya to Syria?
 10 A. Yes. As far as my knowledge, he did, and before that,
 11 he was in Ireland. He's a -- he was a -- he's a Libyan
 12 Irish.
 13 Q. I know this.
 14 A. And he was aided by the Irish Government with money, and
 15 I believe the British Government also knew about that as
 16 well, to go and help Syrians against -- the fight
 17 against Assad.
 18 Q. So you are agreeing with me. He left Libya with a group
 19 of fighters to take up the fight against Assad?
 20 A. Yes, as I said, it was aided by the Irish Government
 21 because he was in Irish before he went to Syria -- in
 22 Ireland before he went to Syria.
 23 Q. And open source reporting, so by that I mean just stuff
 24 you can read on the Internet, has described the group
 25 that he led of fighters in Syria as a Salafi jihadist

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1 group, and do you agree with that?
 2 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: In Syria?
 3 MR GREANEY: In Syria, yes.
 4 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.
 5 MR GREANEY: Do you agree with that description of the group
 6 that he led in Syria; that it was a Salafi jihadist
 7 group?
 8 A. Actually, no, because the real name of it, it was
 9 actually called Liwaa Al-Umma.
 10 Q. Yes.
 11 A. That's the name of it, and it was Libyans and also other
 12 Arabs from all over the world.
 13 Q. As a member of the Tripoli Brigade, did you receive
 14 training?
 15 A. Yes, I was actually -- received training, and because
 16 I was there from the start, also I was translating for
 17 NATO and the uncles and, basically, at the start of the
 18 brigade, before the brigade became a brigade and
 19 everything, I was translating for NATO and everything,
 20 and -- sorry, what was the question again?
 21 Q. Did you receive training in fighting?
 22 A. Yes, actually, I was trained by, actually, NATO as well.
 23 It was just normal basic training.
 24 Q. In weapons?
 25 A. Basic training, yes, like how to aim, shoot and reload.

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1 Q. Did you, in the result, actually fight in the conflict?
 2 A. I did fight in the conflict, yes. I did a lot of
 3 things, and one of them was fighting as well.
 4 Q. Where were you involved in fighting?
 5 A. From -- we started from the border of Tunisia, called
 6 Jebel Nafusa, and it was (inaudible) and everything, and
 7 then there was a big plan of how to take over Tripoli
 8 because that was the stronghold of Gaddafi where he was
 9 living. Part of my job was, actually, because I was
 10 near the border, to flee the women and children to
 11 Tunisia and I was one of the guys who was guarding them
 12 on the way out to Tunisia, and then the fight started.
 13 The fight, basically, it was from those areas, Zintan,
 14 Nalut, all those areas. As we were going down to
 15 Tripoli, and I know the other question is going to come,
 16 and that's where -- how I got injured, basically, on the
 17 way down to Tripoli, basically.
 18 Q. I'm going to ask you about your injury, although not
 19 many questions about it. But let me ask you more
 20 focused questions. Did you ever fight in Syrte?
 21 A. In?
 22 Q. Syrte.
 23 A. Syrte?
 24 Q. Syrte, yes, or Sirte.
 25 A. Sirte?

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1 Q. Yes.
 2 A. No, no. I wasn't in Sirte. That was after my injury
 3 because that was --
 4 MR GREANEY: Mr Weatherby, I think wants to say something.
 5 MR WEATHERBY: I think you may mean Sabratha.
 6 MR GREANEY: Sabratha. Did you ever fight in Sabratha?
 7 A. Not really because I didn't get -- I got injured before
 8 Sabratha, actually.
 9 Q. Did you ever visit Sabratha whilst you were there?
 10 A. In terms of revolution, you mean?
 11 Q. Yes, while you were there from 2011, or 2010.
 12 A. No. I don't recall. Maybe. I can't remember,
 13 actually. Maybe we did go for a picnic there on the
 14 beach, before the revolution, yes.
 15 Q. What about Benghazi? Did you fight in Benghazi?
 16 A. No.
 17 Q. Did you visit Benghazi over this period of the
 18 revolution?
 19 A. No. I'm from the west of Libya.
 20 Q. We know that during the course of the fighting, you
 21 sustained the injuries which require you to use
 22 a wheelchair, and that's correct, isn't it?
 23 A. Yes.
 24 Q. I'm not going to ask you many questions about that, but
 25 is it the position that you were shot during the course

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1 of fighting?
 2 A. Yes, indeed.
 3 Q. And as we've understood it, you received treatment in
 4 Germany, is that correct?
 5 A. Libya, Tunisia and Germany, yes.
 6 Q. And then in due course, you returned to live in
 7 South Manchester.
 8 A. Yes, from Germany, yes, I returned back home to
 9 Manchester, which is more comfortable for me and more
 10 better, even -- even with the doctors and hospitals and
 11 I give ...
 12 Q. When was it that you returned home to South Manchester?
 13 A. To be honest, I don't recall exactly the date, but --
 14 Q. But a month and a year will help, or even just a year.
 15 Was it later in 2011 or into 2012?
 16 A. 11 or -- probably, yes, end of 11 or 12, I think.
 17 Q. End of 2011, something like that?
 18 A. Yes.
 19 Q. Would it, do you think, be fair to say that having
 20 fought in the conflict in Libya and having been very
 21 seriously injured, that on return you became something
 22 of a hero to young men of Libyan heritage in
 23 South Manchester?
 24 A. Well, I wouldn't call myself a hero, but it is our
 25 culture, basically, to -- a lot of others were injured

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1 as well, but not as severe as me, in Libya who were from
 2 Manchester, and just to comfort me and make me feel
 3 proud of what I've done and everything.
 4 Q. Right. So that may be an answer to my question, but let
 5 me just phrase it in a slightly different way to make
 6 sure. Over that period, having returned from fighting
 7 injured, did you have a sense that the young men of
 8 Libyan heritage from within your community admired you
 9 for what you'd done and what you'd been through?
 10 A. It's not actually young men; it's actually that they are
 11 my boys, which means my friends. Also the uncles as
 12 well, who are my dad's friends and everything. They
 13 also fought themselves, but because I got injured and
 14 everything, it's different in our -- basically, in our
 15 culture, they were very protective, they were protective
 16 over me and taking care of me and everything.
 17 So I wasn't -- I wouldn't call myself I was a hero
 18 or looked up to or admired, that people admired what
 19 I did, because people themselves fought in Libya and
 20 even my brother, my boys, friends from Manchester, they
 21 were fighting.
 22 Q. I'm going to ask you that in a moment, but let me just
 23 ask you two very direct questions. First of all, did
 24 you return from the conflict in Libya as a supporter of
 25 Islamic State or Al-Qaeda?

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1 A. Islamic State? That didn't even come out at the time.
 2 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I'm really sorry, I wanted for this not
 3 to be any longer ordeal for you than it has to be.
 4 I think probably your answer is no, you didn't come back
 5 as a supporter of Al-Qaeda or Islamic State?
 6 A. No.
 7 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay. Well, that'll do, then. "No" is
 8 a good answer. Thank you.
 9 A. Okay.
 10 MR GREANEY: I'm going to ask you, before I suggest to
 11 the chairman that we take a break, about some others
 12 that you knew and whether they have any connection with
 13 the Libyan conflict.
 14 Was Ramadan Abedi involved in fighting in Libya?
 15 A. I know that he was -- he was helping. That's all
 16 I know.
 17 Q. Helping in what way?
 18 A. In what way I don't know, because I was busy in --
 19 we were very busy at the time in Libya. I did see --
 20 I see him in Libya, in the border of Tunisia. That's
 21 all I can recall and remember.
 22 Q. Was he a member of the same brigade as you?
 23 A. Yes, slightly, yes.
 24 Q. Was Salman Abedi involved in fighting in Libya?
 25 A. I ... I don't know, to be honest.

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1 Q. Was he a member of the same brigade as you?
 2 A. Not really. He wasn't in my brigade at all.
 3 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: When you saw Ramadan Abedi, was Salman
 4 with him?
 5 A. Not really.
 6 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I don't understand "not really". Was he
 7 with him?
 8 A. No, he wasn't with his dad.
 9 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Wasn't with him, but did you see him out
 10 there?
 11 A. I've seen Salman in Libya at the time. I did see him.
 12 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: At the time of the uprising?
 13 A. Yes, I did see him.
 14 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: When you saw him, what was he doing?
 15 Where was he?
 16 A. I just saw him actually outside my brigade, but it
 17 was -- I just say, "Salaam, how are you doing? You all
 18 right?" And that's all.
 19 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: He was outside your brigade?
 20 A. Outside, basically -- the street, basically.
 21 MR GREANEY: We have seen images of him with weapons next to
 22 a logo of the 17th February Martyrs Brigade, and do you
 23 remember him hanging around the locations of that
 24 brigade?
 25 A. No, I've only seen him once, actually, at the time of

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1 the revolution.
 2 Q. Hashem Abedi; do you remember seeing him in Libya during
 3 the time of the uprising?
 4 A. No, I haven't seen him at all.
 5 Q. Do you know a man called Ahmed Taghdi?
 6 A. Yes, also a friend.
 7 Q. And someone who visited you in prison, as Salman Abedi
 8 did. Was he someone that you saw during the revolution
 9 in Libya?
 10 A. Ahmed Taghdi ... yes, I believe I did see him
 11 afterwards, yes, before I got injured, yes.
 12 Q. Was he involved in the fighting in Libya?
 13 A. I don't recall. I mean, most of my boys actually were
 14 involved, yeah.
 15 Q. So most of your boys were involved in fighting in Libya?
 16 A. Yes, from Manchester, basically, yes.
 17 Q. And was one of your boys Taghdi?
 18 A. I believe he was, yes.
 19 Q. Just before we take that break, I'm going to ask you
 20 about some other groups and whether you encountered them
 21 in Libya during the uprising. Did you encounter, whilst
 22 you were there, members of Ansar al-Sharia?
 23 A. No. At the time, no, not at all.
 24 Q. And did you hear about that organisation whilst you were
 25 fighting in Libya?

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1 A. No.
 2 Q. Did you encounter, whilst you were there and engaged in
 3 the fighting, members of Al-Qaeda?
 4 A. No. As I said, the Tripoli Brigade, that's my brigade,
 5 led by Mahdi al-Harati and ...
 6 Q. Did you encounter any members of any organisation that
 7 would be described as a terrorist organisation whilst
 8 you were there?
 9 A. No.
 10 MR GREANEY: Sir, I'm going to move on from there to discuss
 11 with the witness the circumstances in which he was
 12 convicted of terrorism offences. This would be
 13 an appropriate time for a break.
 14 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: It would be. Because of maybe having
 15 more, I'd quite like to limit of length of them, if at
 16 all possible, and also the practicalities of this. If
 17 you're going to move the witness, how long does that
 18 take?
 19 MR GREANEY: Sir, he's moving to nearby.
 20 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Close by, okay. If I make it quarter of
 21 an hour, does that give you all enough time?
 22 Is that enough for you?
 23 A. Quarter of an hour?
 24 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Yes. Is that enough for you?
 25 A. 20 minutes, probably.

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1 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay, you can have 20 minutes.
 2 A. Just relaxing and ...
 3 MR GREANEY: Thank you.
 4 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay, very well. Can we try and be
 5 prompt on 20 minutes?
 6 MR GREANEY: Yes.
 7 (12.20 pm)
 8 (A short break)
 9 (12.41 pm)
 10 MR GREANEY: Sir, the plan is to go on until 1.30 or 1.40.
 11 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I hope that's all right with people who
 12 I know have a hot lunch and things like that. I think
 13 arrangements have been made that it'll be about 1.30.
 14 MR GREANEY: They are, sir, yes.
 15 Mr Abdallah, as I indicated, I'm turning to deal
 16 with your conviction next. Certainly for my part, I am
 17 not going to go into any detail about all of the
 18 underlying evidence, all of the stuff that Max Hill QC
 19 asked you about when he cross-examined you at your
 20 trial. I just want to establish certain basic facts
 21 which I don't believe you're in a position to challenge.
 22 Let's see how we go.
 23 First, do you agree that on 11 May 2016, following
 24 a trial at which you gave evidence, you were convicted
 25 of one count of preparing terrorist acts and

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1 a second count of being concerned in a funding
 2 arrangement related to terrorism?
 3 A. Yes, that was my conviction.
 4 Q. I am, at the end of all of this, going to give you
 5 an opportunity to say whether or not you accept that you
 6 were properly convicted, but for the time being, let's
 7 just deal with some basic indisputable facts.
 8 We can see, I believe you'll be able to agree, the
 9 particulars of the offences that you were convicted of
 10 at {INQ042313/686}.
 11 Every document I'm going to take you to,
 12 Mr Abdallah, you have seen in the bundle that you've
 13 got. That will be the same for every other person who
 14 asks you questions. You will not be asked about any
 15 document that you have not seen or had an opportunity to
 16 see. Do you have that? Page 686.
 17 This is a page in the statement of the senior
 18 investigating officer for Operation Manteline, the
 19 investigation into the arena attack. Count 1, as
 20 I said, preparation of terrorist acts contrary to
 21 section 5(1) of the Terrorism Act 2006.
 22 Could you please enlarge the section I'm going to
 23 read from? Thank you very much.
 24 A. Thank you, yes.
 25 Q. Particulars of offence, so this is essentially what you

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1 were accused of in summary form:
 2 "... on or before 31 July 2014, with the intention
 3 of assisting others in committing acts of terrorism
 4 engaged in conduct in preparation for giving effect to
 5 his intention, namely:
 6 "(a) arranged the provision of firearms for
 7 [a number of named individuals];
 8 "(b) arranged for a contact to meet [those] same men
 9 in Syria and arranged to their travel and accommodation;
 10 "(c) communicated to [two of those men, one of them
 11 being your brother] the progress of the travel of [the
 12 other two men] for the purpose of them all meeting;
 13 "(d) encouraged [two men] to join in a battle, and
 14 more generally to participate in Jihad;
 15 "(e) tried to arrange for an English speaker to meet
 16 with [one of those] on his planned arrival in Turkey;
 17 "(f) communicated with another person to facilitate
 18 [one of those persons] travel through Belgium;
 19 "(g) [otherwise] facilitated [one of those men's]
 20 planned travel to Syria."
 21 The second charge or count being concerned in
 22 a funding arrangement, over the page, please,
 23 {INQ042313/687}, and enlarge the top of the page,
 24 please.
 25 Between 16 and 19 July, you entered into or became

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1 concerned in an arrangement as a result of which £2,000
 2 was made available to your brother and when you knew or
 3 had reasonable cause to suspect that it would be used
 4 for the purposes of terrorism.
 5 We can agree, I'm sure, that you were convicted of
 6 those offences with those particulars, do you agree?
 7 A. Yes, my — that was my conviction, and the fact is — of
 8 my convictions was — it is nothing to do with any group
 9 or anything like that. It was actually just same as
 10 what was going on in Libya, and how it happened, just,
 11 basically, I did help my brother and my co—d —
 12 Q. To go where?
 13 A. To Syria, and the fact is they made their own way,
 14 Mohammed and Nezar. They went and decided to go to
 15 Libya by themselves — Syria by themselves. They
 16 travelled to Libya and they called me from Libya and
 17 they told me they were going to Syria and Stephen knows
 18 about it. The contacts and the connections in Syria was
 19 all my co—d's, Stephen Gray's, connection, and even with
 20 the firearms, and he already mentioned that in court.
 21 And the money that I was convicted with, it was my
 22 brother's money that — he worked in Libya, which he —
 23 when he came back to the UK, he was stopped with that
 24 money. The police took it off him and he proved to the
 25 police that it was his money as he brought evidence that

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1 he was working in Libya. No, this is — I'm just
 2 explaining, basically. Then the police itself, the CTU
 3 police, gave the money to my brother back, basically.
 4 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Mr Abdallah, can I just stop you for
 5 a moment? I have read your evidence at the trial. You
 6 pleaded not guilty and you gave the account that
 7 you have just been summarising to me just now. The jury
 8 convicted you. You are perfectly entitled to maintain
 9 the fact that you didn't commit the offence. Do you
 10 understand?
 11 But from my point of view, because of there being
 12 a conviction, and your appeal was unsuccessful as well,
 13 I have to treat you as if you did it. That's not
 14 stopping you saying that you were not guilty, but that's
 15 not going to be a concern of mine at this inquiry. Do
 16 you understand?
 17 A. Yes, but just to explain, basically, we got the — other
 18 people doesn't know, basically, what's going on.
 19 I'm just explaining that even the £2,000, basically —
 20 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Your brother's?
 21 A. The question, he asked me, basically, you've got — it's
 22 going to be an act of terrorism or something like that.
 23 No. The fact is — I'm explaining, basically — end
 24 of July, I got raided. My phone was taken off, and
 25 I never had a contact with my brother after all at all.

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1 And that money, it was sent for him by my dad to buy
 2 tickets and to go back to Libya, and that's how —
 3 that's all I know.
 4 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay, thank you.
 5 MR GREANEY: So we do understand that you maintain that you
 6 were incorrectly convicted. I want to get through this
 7 as quickly as we can, for your sake as much as mine, but
 8 I want to show you what the Court of Appeal said by way
 9 of summary of your conduct, because you appealed to the
 10 Court of Appeal, did you not? There was an appeal.
 11 A. Yes, there was an appeal, yes.
 12 Q. Let's see how they characterised what you had been
 13 convicted of. Could we go, please, to {INQ042313/61}.
 14 It's paragraph 18 of the judgment of the Court of Appeal
 15 Criminal Division. The citation is [2017] 1 WLR,
 16 page 1699.
 17 So the summary of the Court of Appeal of the facts
 18 underpinning your conviction:
 19 "Abdallah and Gray were active in a terrorist group
 20 based in Manchester in 2014."
 21 Then over the page, please, {INQ042313/62},
 22 paragraph 24:
 23 "Abdallah [that's you, not your brother] organised
 24 the terrorist activities of the Manchester group. He
 25 provided practical and emotional support to the members

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1 of the group."
 2 If I were to suggest to you that those
 3 two paragraphs — from the screen, please — are
 4 an accurate summary of what you did in 2014, you would
 5 dispute that, no doubt?
 6 A. These paragraphs, basically, that's what I was convicted
 7 of.
 8 Q. Yes.
 9 A. And what I did is what I did; basically helped my
 10 brother.
 11 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: We understand the Court of Appeal are
 12 only reflecting the evidence which was given at the
 13 trial.
 14 A. Yes. Well, there's just one thing that I want just to
 15 say, basically. At the time, 2014, it was common sense
 16 that a lot of Libyans were going to Libya — to Syria
 17 and fight, it was normal. People from the UK was going
 18 to Libya — to Syria to fight. It was classified as
 19 an act of terror, terrorism. Whether you were fighting
 20 the terrorists or you were fighting with them, you
 21 still — they were still convicted as a terrorist.
 22 But at the same time, just to explain to people and
 23 the nation as well, in 2014, if you had helped or
 24 assisted anyone who was going in Libya and did [sic]
 25 people go from UK to Libya and fight against Haftar, it

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1 was not classified as terrorist or an act of terror .
 2 So to me, I'm trying to understand the logic out of
 3 it , basically . This is for a political reason. The
 4 British Government took it as an act of terror, whoever
 5 goes to Syria, regardless whether you help the civilians
 6 or not. But if you go to Libya, it's not an act of
 7 terror . So this is their position or a political view
 8 maybe for their own gains or whatever, something like
 9 that.
 10 MR GREANEY: Well, the simple facts that we will be able to
 11 agree upon are these. (1) you were convicted of
 12 terrorist offences. (2) you dispute your conviction.
 13 And shall we leave it there, if you agree with that?
 14 A. No, I just explained to people, basically , because the
 15 nation needs to understand, basically , what is going on
 16 in the Middle East exactly and what's really going on,
 17 because --
 18 Q. What was going on in Syria was that Islamic State --
 19 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Can we stop for a moment? I'm so sorry.
 20 A. I think --
 21 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Mr Abdallah, just listen to me for
 22 a minute, do you mind? You've had your say about it and
 23 you've explained the politics behind it. There's quite
 24 a lot in open source material about all these things and
 25 how the British Government was in relation to Libya and

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1 stuff like that, and I don't want to get involved in
 2 that because it's not relevant to what I'm deciding. Do
 3 you understand?
 4 A. It's -- I believe it is kind of relevant because what
 5 led to Syria, it started from Libya and started my
 6 conviction and everything. And that's why he's asking
 7 me these questions and I'm giving answers and
 8 everything, basically --
 9 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay.
 10 A. -- and trying to explain, and I think I've got the right
 11 to do so as well.
 12 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Shall we just move on now?
 13 MR GREANEY: Yes. I'm going to ask you next about your
 14 brother, Mohammed Abdallah, and, again, I'm just going
 15 to invite you to agree some basic facts.
 16 Did he fight in the Libyan conflict in 2011, your
 17 brother?
 18 A. Yes, he did.
 19 Q. For whom did he fight?
 20 A. He was fighting with me. We were both from Tripoli.
 21 He's my brother, so the Tripoli Brigade, as it is -- as
 22 it says in the Internet and in YouTube as well, and
 23 there's a documentary about us and, actually,
 24 David Cameron praised us very well after the revolution
 25 and he came and he was very proud of us and very proud

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1 of the sacrifice that we did.
 2 Q. I'm asking about your brother, who did fight alongside
 3 you in Libya. Did he subsequently travel to Syria?
 4 A. Yes, he did travel to Syria, with his own will.
 5 Q. Did he fight in Syria, so far as you understood?
 6 A. No, he did not fight in Syria at all .
 7 Q. And did he join Islamic State?
 8 A. The fact is he did enter, what do you call it, the
 9 territory of ISIS, yes. That's what I know. I wasn't
 10 present at the time. And then I've heard of that when
 11 he came back from prison and then he explained to me
 12 what happened.
 13 Q. As we know, he, in due course, was convicted separately
 14 from you of terrorist offences.
 15 Was your brother, Mohammed Abdallah, a friend of
 16 Ismail Abedi?
 17 A. Yes, he knows -- he knows Ismail. He wasn't close to
 18 him.
 19 Q. Was he a friend of Salman Abedi?
 20 A. Yes, he was. They were chilling in town, doing what
 21 they're doing, partying, smoking, whatever they're doing
 22 since day one, after the Libyan revolution.
 23 Q. And was he a friend of Hashem Abedi?
 24 A. No, Hashem was just -- Hashem was a little kid who was
 25 just chilling with the young kids his age.

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1 Q. So let's move on and deal with the contact that you had
 2 with Salman Abedi over the period from 2014 to 2017. As
 3 we've just agreed about, you were convicted of offences
 4 that related to your activities in 2014, and do you
 5 remember that it was in late 2014 that you were arrested
 6 and charged with the offences of which you were
 7 convicted?
 8 A. Yes.
 9 Q. I can take you to the page if it's really necessary, but
 10 the date that you were arrested and charged, certainly
 11 the date of your arrest , was 28 November 2014. You'll
 12 maybe take that from me.
 13 A. Yes, I'll take it from you.
 14 Q. And do you remember that on the occasion of your arrest,
 15 your mobile telephone was seized?
 16 A. Yes.
 17 Q. And do you agree, as I think again is indisputable, that
 18 an analysis of data relating to your phone revealed that
 19 it had been in contact with a number ending 3458?
 20 A. That -- I don't recall the number. What --
 21 Q. Salman Abedi's number, okay? An analysis of the data
 22 from your phone revealed that it had been in contact
 23 with Salman Abedi's phone. And you accept that, don't
 24 you?
 25 A. Yes, I do accept that, yes.

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1 Q. Do you accept that your contact was very extensive with
2 Salman Abedi in the period before your arrest in
3 November 2014?
4 A. Yes, as a — as I was — yes, as a — sorry, I mean
5 I was talking to Salman as I was talking to everyone
6 else who was my boys and everyone, and I was texting
7 a lot of people. It was just normal, just calling,
8 talking to your friends and everything.
9 Q. The data reveals that between 5 and 28 November 2014,
10 a period of 24 days, there were 1,000 contacts by text
11 or iMessage between your phone and that of Salman Abedi.
12 So, on average, more than 40 a day.
13 A. Yes, I've seen — I've seen it in the disclosure, yes,
14 that was given to us.
15 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: That's text messages, not phone calls?
16 MR GREANEY: Text messages and iMessages. It's messages.
17 That's the effect of the evidence.
18 In those contacts, in those messages or some of
19 them, were you grooming or seeking to groom Salman Abedi
20 into an extremist mindset?
21 A. No. First thing, I don't even have an extreme mindset
22 myself. My fight was always — from the start was
23 against Gaddafi and Assad. So I'm not a groomer or
24 I wasn't grooming Salman to anything.
25 Q. What was the purpose of that messaging between you and

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1 Salman Abedi in 2014?
2 A. It was just normal chit-chat, talking about life,
3 talking about what was going on in our countries, as
4 I was with other mates, and it was just normal, normal
5 for us to talk about what was going on in our lands and
6 particularly Syria, as the whole Arab world was watching
7 and looking.
8 Q. We're going to look next at some of the messaging
9 between the two of you. It starts at {INQ042313/702}.
10 So that everyone knows, this is annex 5 to the witness
11 statement of Mr Barraclough.
12 These are messages in November 2014. You to
13 Salman Abedi:
14 "You know, I was listening to the description of
15 'Hoor' (Maidens of Paradise)."
16 A. Can you just tell me what date it was, please?
17 Q. I can tell you it was between the 5th and 28th —
18 perhaps if you scroll a little further up the page.
19 A. Because I've got the messages here in the bundle, so
20 I was looking ...
21 Q. Can you go and find the date, which will be higher up,
22 Mr Lopez? We'll find out the date, if it's important to
23 you.
24 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: So you've actually got the messages
25 there in a different format from what we're looking at

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1 on the screen?
2 A. Yes, it's a — yes, different from what exactly the
3 disclosure is, which is much detail and it's more
4 easier.
5 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: We'll try and find it for you, but at
6 the moment, just concentrate on what's on the screen, if
7 that's all right.
8 MR GREANEY: It may be that the date is not the most
9 important thing, Mr Abdallah, bearing in mind we know
10 that it's between the 5th and —
11 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I think he wanted the date in order to
12 find it on the schedule.
13 MR GREANEY: I see. I'm so sorry, Mr Abdallah. It's before
14 13 November.
15 A. Okay.
16 Q. No, it is on 13 November.
17 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay, you've got 13 November?
18 MR GREANEY: We need just to read after, not before.
19 MR MENON: Sir, I'm sorry to interrupt, but he really needs
20 to see the original Arabic to be able to answer any
21 questions, if questions are going to be asked about the
22 meaning of the words used. I think they are available
23 in the bundle in the call data, I believe, which is
24 probably what —
25 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I think that's what he may be looking

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1 at.
2 MR MENON: Yes, I think maybe. I don't know.
3 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Are you looking at them in the original
4 Arabic?
5 A. Yes, that's the — yes.
6 MR MENON: That's fine.
7 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Can you find a mention of "Maidens of
8 Paradise"?
9 A. Yes. You said it's on 13 —
10 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: 13 November.
11 MR GREANEY: You know, I'm certain, Mr Abdallah, what
12 I'm going to be asking about. It's the references to
13 martyrdom that are within the exchanges you had with
14 Salman Abedi.
15 A. Mm—hm.
16 Q. So here we have that exchange on 13 November. The
17 translation is:
18 "The 'Hoor'! Go straightaway."
19 "Oh my God."
20 Then you saying, so far as has been translated:
21 "I ask Allah for 'Shahada'.
22 Which has been translated as "martyrdom".
23 And Salman Abedi replies, as we can see:
24 "Hahaha."
25 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I think Mr Weatherby is about to say

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1 something. He has his finger on the button.
 2 MR WEATHERBY: Yes, I have. Sorry to interrupt. I can give
 3 a page reference if it's helpful to Mr Abdallah.
 4 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Have you find the particular one?
 5 A. Not really.
 6 MR WEATHERBY: It's page 625. It's, in fact, I think
 7 22 November, and it's line 21566, and the line numbers
 8 are on the right.
 9 A. 22nd?
 10 MR GREANEY: That's very helpful.
 11 A. That's very -- so it's the 22nd, and the number, did you
 12 say, the message?
 13 MR WEATHERBY: 21566.
 14 A. 21566, yes. That is the -- we're talking about the
 15 maidens of paradise.
 16 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Yes, that's the one we've got to, and
 17 then we go a few more down, I think.
 18 A. Yes. So, you know, I was listening to the description
 19 of Hoor, yes.
 20 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay.
 21 MR GREANEY: Do you agree that one of the messages that you
 22 sent during the course of this exchange to Salman Abedi
 23 was, translated into English, "I ask Allah for
 24 'Shahada'," meaning "martyrdom"?
 25 A. This is -- yes. Yes, I have sent a message to him

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1 "shahada", martyrdom. After -- after I was listening to
 2 the description of maidens of heaven and as a Muslim,
 3 and every Muslim, basically, the word "jihad" and
 4 "martyrdom" is actually called "shahada". Shahada is
 5 like a testimony, which means a death that is --
 6 you have died and in a nice -- basically, you come out
 7 of this life to the other life and accepted by God,
 8 basically. And in Islam, shahada is basically one of
 9 the highest -- basically, one of the highest places in
 10 heaven that God will accept you because of the hardness
 11 of the death that you take.
 12 And to explain more about shahada, just it won't
 13 take -- for a minute, there's two forms of shahada.
 14 There's the form of shahada which -- in the most
 15 authentic hadiths, which is -- the Prophet says from the
 16 scholars and -- a Muslim, basically, a shahada, whoever
 17 dies, basically, for example, fire, burn or illness or
 18 coronavirus, so on. So certain things like -- it's
 19 called martyrdom as well, shahada.
 20 And there's another shahada, which is in
 21 a battlefield as well. So the terms of shahada
 22 basically, not on the battlefield, means you are
 23 fighting for the sake of God, meaning you are doing what
 24 exactly happened; like, for example, in Libya, defending
 25 yourself against an enemy dictator, whoever's trying to

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1 kill you, basically.
 2 Because it's actually a fight and it's a war, and if
 3 you end up dying, hopefully by -- and your intentions
 4 were right, you are granted, basically, as we say in
 5 Arabic, inshallah, God willing, shahada, which is the
 6 highest state in heaven with the Prophets and so--and--so.
 7 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Can you just explain to me why you were
 8 having that sort of communication with Salman Abedi
 9 about dying in that sort of way?
 10 A. Because as our Prophet, peace be upon him, taught us, he
 11 said when you ask God about death or ask him for
 12 shahada, ask him for the highest place in heaven, and as
 13 a Muslim, that's what I wish for myself --
 14 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay.
 15 A. -- and for other Muslims as well, to be honest.
 16 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I understand that. I just want to know
 17 how it comes about that you're having a text exchange
 18 about this with Salman Abedi. It's not the normal thing
 19 you have text exchanges about, is it?
 20 A. No, we were listening to the maidens of heavens and
 21 that's how it happened, basically. I'm listening to the
 22 description of the women in heaven and then I say "ask".
 23 I say "ask about shahada", which means, basically,
 24 a death that is pleased by God, basically.
 25 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I understand what you mean about

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1 shahada.
 2 MR GREANEY: Next message in translation, and I'm sure
 3 someone will help me with where this is in the schedule
 4 that you're looking at, but the exchange starts at
 5 page 617 and it's the very top of that page.
 6 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Have you got that, page 617, at the very
 7 top?
 8 A. What is the message about?
 9 MR GREANEY: So it's the very top message, Salman Abedi to
 10 you:
 11 "Have you heard about Khawlan?"
 12 I'm sure my pronunciation will be incorrect. Well,
 13 can I read them out and then --
 14 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Have you found it?
 15 A. I haven't found it, but I recall that message in my head
 16 still, Khawlan, yes:
 17 "Have you heard about Khawlan?"
 18 MR GREANEY: Top of page 617. I'm very keen that you should
 19 see the original Arabic if that's important to you.
 20 A. Yes. Yes, thank you.
 21 "Have you heard about Khawlan?"
 22 Yes.
 23 Q. "He was martyred", continues Salman Abedi. You reply
 24 "yeah" and then:
 25 "May Allah Place His Mercy on him."

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1 And Salman replies, "Anmen". Presumably --
 2 A. Amen, basically.
 3 Q. Exactly.
 4 A. It's like in English we say, "Rest in peace".
 5 Q. So what was that discussion about and why were you
 6 having it?
 7 A. That discussion, basically, at the time, there was a war
 8 in the east of Libya and it was against another dictator
 9 that came after Gaddafi. He was called General Haftar,
 10 and a lot of my friends in Libya, a lot of my boys,
 11 actually were fighting in that area, young men, uncles
 12 and everyone, and one of them is Khawlan, who we both
 13 knew, knew him, and unfortunately, he died in the
 14 battlefield, covering up for the lads to escape the area
 15 that they were in, basically. So we just basically --
 16 Q. And did you regard him as a martyr?
 17 A. I asked God to accept him and guide him as a martyr,
 18 basically, fighting for his country and defending his
 19 land and his people.
 20 Q. And the next page, please. {INQ042313/703}. I'm going
 21 to hope that Mr de la Poer can identify this. This is
 22 another discussion in which the term "martyrdom" arises.
 23 Page 621. It's about eight lines up from the bottom of
 24 that page.
 25 A. Yes.

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1 Q. You're looking for:
 2 "By Allah, I'm thinking of those young men who
 3 died."
 4 A. Yes, I can see that.
 5 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay, good.
 6 MR GREANEY: So you commence this particular exchange:
 7 "By Allah, I'm thinking of those young men who
 8 died."
 9 And then a series of messages, most of which read
 10 together:
 11 "My brother
 12 "they are supposed to be crying for you
 13 "soon, Allah willing
 14 "pray to Allah
 15 "and persist in supplication."
 16 "Ask Him (Allah) for martyrdom."
 17 Says Salman Abedi:
 18 "By Allah, oh Abdul Raouf
 19 "every day
 20 "on every kneeling (prostrate in prayer)
 21 "I ask
 22 "my Lord
 23 "for martyrdom."
 24 And your reply:
 25 "and I want to follow them but I cannot

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1 "I ask Allah for His Grace. He the Almighty is the
 2 Most Generous."
 3 Salman Abedi replies:
 4 "Amen, Oh Lord of the Worlds
 5 "Oh Lord, Amen
 6 "my Lord is Merciful
 7 "Merciful
 8 "and He Knows."
 9 And you reply:
 10 "Me too
 11 "I supplicate for my Lord to make me recover so that
 12 I could go to the place of martyrdom to get killed
 13 "rotten life
 14 "yeah, Glory belongs to Allah."
 15 Is that a discussion between you and Salman Abedi
 16 about martyrdom in which you both express approval of
 17 martyrdom or is it something different?
 18 A. I think you jumped up a little bit on those messages,
 19 but before -- I'm speaking to two people at the same
 20 time. One of them was Elyas Elmehti, and he was
 21 fighting in the east of Libya with the rebels against
 22 Haftar. So -- but then there were ceasefires, and as
 23 I called Elyas on the phone, he was telling me,
 24 "So--and--so has gone, so--and--so passed away, so--and--so
 25 got killed, so--and--so got killed". So I'm a human

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1 being. Emotionally, when a person dies, it's a friend
 2 close to you, basically, I felt upset and sad, and as
 3 I said to him, I'm thinking of those people who's gone,
 4 the young men who died, basically.
 5 [Arabic spoken] and I want to follow them, but
 6 I cannot. Yes, I was talking about shahada, which is
 7 martyrdom, because when -- it was death at the time, as
 8 we were talking about death and everything, and a lot of
 9 our friends we lost, we were praying. We want them to
 10 be accepted by God and for even us to be granted that
 11 place in heaven as a martyr himself -- as a martyr
 12 ourselves.
 13 And just to clarify, basically, the shahada, again,
 14 basically, is not something to do with any extremism or
 15 terrorism. As our Prophet, peace be upon him, himself
 16 in his -- say -- taught us and he said in Arabic [Arabic
 17 spoken], meaning in English by Allah, as a Prophet, if
 18 I was granted to die as a shahid and come back to this
 19 life, I will ask for shahada again granted for this
 20 life, just to teach us that this death is actually
 21 granted high in heaven.
 22 But to explain more as well, it's not going out and
 23 do whatever you want and kill on your own head and
 24 everything, and then say, oh, now it's a martyr. It's
 25 actually fighting for the sake of God, meaning

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1 intentionally not for anything else, for any gain of
 2 this life, power, money, anything like that.
 3 Q. Thank you for that detailed answer. Does it come to
 4 this; that in that conversation, you and Salman Abedi
 5 were jointly praising the concept of martyrdom?
 6 A. Praising? Um, I mean ... what do you mean, like? What
 7 do you mean, like, praising?
 8 Q. You were approving and regarding as a good thing the
 9 concept of martyrdom, the two of you jointly. Is that
 10 what you were doing?
 11 A. That is not -- yes, that's what we're doing, but it's
 12 not me and Salman; it's the Koran and the Prophet say.
 13 This is the Islam religion.
 14 Q. As you interpret it.
 15 A. Yes. It's not my -- it's not something that me and
 16 Salman made up. It's part of Islam and every Muslim
 17 believes in it and every Muslim wishes to die as
 18 a martyr because of the high state of -- in the
 19 hereafter.
 20 Q. Is it or would it be reasonable to conclude that in
 21 these messages, and perhaps in particular in that
 22 message, you were encouraging Salman Abedi to the same
 23 mindset as your own?
 24 A. What is the mindset? First thing, I want you to
 25 clarify: what is my mindset?

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1 Q. Your mindset is that martyrdom is a good thing. Were
 2 you seeking to persuade him to that frame of mind?
 3 A. First thing, as I say again, as a Muslim, yes, martyr is
 4 a good thing and it's one of the best things to God.
 5 That's the teaching from our God and our Prophet, peace
 6 be upon him. And if you've got -- if you think that's
 7 extreme or terrorist, then you've got a problem with the
 8 Islam religion itself.
 9 Secondly, I'm not persuading him anything, as he
 10 himself asking God for the shahada, as I said to you,
 11 a Muslim. I'm not persuading him or doing anything to
 12 him. The fact is he's asking, as you can see in the
 13 other messages as well. Yes, I pray to the God to give
 14 me shahada and I was very upset of my friends and
 15 he was -- in Arabic, he was comforting me, as I was
 16 upset, saying, "Oh, they should be crying for you.
 17 Don't worry." They got -- basically, as in other
 18 messages, "Give you recovery", and this and that. It's
 19 a normal thing.
 20 Q. Can I ask you: you were older than him to some extent.
 21 You were regarded by some within your community with
 22 admiration because you had fought and been injured in
 23 the conflict.
 24 A. Regarded as what?
 25 Q. You were regarded, well regarded, by some in your

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1 community because you had fought in Libya and had been
 2 injured. What were you doing talking to this younger
 3 man about martyrdom in these terms, Mr Abdallah?
 4 A. Again, you didn't answer my question. Regarded as what?
 5 Q. As a hero by some in your community.
 6 A. Again, we're just going in circles.
 7 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Let's forget about being well regarded
 8 in your community. You've told us that and how you'd
 9 been regarded.
 10 A. I said to you I wanted to be treated fairly from
 11 day one. I know what you're doing, the picture he's
 12 trying to paint, okay? I'm going to continue to explain
 13 myself and I don't care how long it takes.
 14 MR GREANEY: Okay.
 15 A. The fact is, this is the Islam religion, and I keep
 16 telling you, I'm not regarded as a hero or anything.
 17 Whatever Dr Wilkinson, who's written in his own report
 18 by -- he's assuming and accusing me for a lot of things,
 19 a man that never met me and doesn't know anything about
 20 me. The fact is, talking about martyrdom is something
 21 normal when it comes to death. That's what we --
 22 a Muslim, when it comes to death, we talk about [Arabic
 23 spoken], the good end of this life.
 24 Why was I talking about it? Because -- you're just
 25 choosing and picking whatever message you want. As

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1 I said, it's continuous from the messages before as
 2 I was talking to Elyas. My friends died in Libya at the
 3 time and he was telling me who died and died and died,
 4 and of course, I'm a human being, I'm upset. You would
 5 never, ever, ever, ever understand that feeling. Just
 6 explain to you, that's the truth of the matter. Neither
 7 you. That's the truth of the matter.
 8 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Let's stop being personal, shall we?
 9 A. I'm not being personal, but this is the truth of the
 10 matter.
 11 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Hang on. You're being given every
 12 opportunity to answer the questions, all right, and
 13 I will ensure that happens. That doesn't mean you tell
 14 us again and again and again the same thing, all right?
 15 And also, people want to know the explanation for this.
 16 They're talking about the martyrdom, and you have given
 17 us the explanation. We understand now what you're
 18 saying, all right?
 19 MR GREANEY: So before we move on, let me just ask you
 20 another direct question and invite a direct answer.
 21 Do you accept that the type of discussions that you were
 22 having with Salman Abedi played at least a part in what
 23 caused him to become radicalised?
 24 A. Well, first thing, I don't even know and I never knew
 25 that he was radicalised. I was in prison at that time

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1 and after I got my conviction, and after reading the
2 disclosure and everything and evidence that you guys has
3 given to us, basically, I did not know anything what
4 he was doing outside, and I didn't play any part of
5 radicalisation or anything, and again, just to tell you
6 that my fight was against Gaddafi and Assad and the
7 dictators in our countries, nowhere else.

8 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Can I have your insight, as a close
9 friend of Salman's who spoke to him on a regular basis,
10 did you ever have any suspicion that he would become
11 a suicide bomber?

12 A. No. No way.

13 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: So --

14 A. No. None of us, not me or my friends or anyone, had any
15 idea what was going on in Salman's head. The fact is,
16 when it happened, I heard it in the radio because I was
17 on basic at that time in prison, and I actually called
18 my friend Elyas on the prison phone. I was crying and
19 confused and shocked. I said, "What the hell happened?
20 I thought he was in Libya." He said, "It's true, yeah,
21 it is him. It's in the news."

22 So what happened to Salman, it's a very -- it's
23 something that I can never, ever, ever take it out of my
24 mind and it's haunting me until now because he's my
25 friend, and the Salman that I knew, he had never, ever

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1 spoke about something like that or doing anything
2 horrific like that.
3 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay. So you have given this a lot of
4 thought, obviously, and we want some idea of what
5 changed, could have changed, the Salman you knew into
6 the Salman who killed 22 people with a suicide bomb on
7 22 May. So you knew him much better than we did.

8 A. Yes.

9 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: So what do you think could have happened
10 to cause this to happen?

11 A. The truth of the matter, I don't really know. I've got
12 convicted, went to prison and I was busy with my life.
13 And I've seen him twice after my conviction in prison
14 and called him a couple of times, but he only answered
15 twice, and that's all I know. And after -- after what
16 happened, I called my friends and everything, and Elyas
17 and everyone, and I said, "What the hell happened? What
18 was he doing?"

19 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay. We're going to go through those
20 other things in a minute, I'm sure, but what I want to
21 say to you is we are enquiring into what happened.

22 You are someone we think may be able to help us. That's
23 why we're asking these questions. Do you understand?

24 A. Yes, of course.

25 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: We're not here to get at you. We're

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1 here to try and find out what happened.

2 A. No. Yes, of course. I myself -- until now, actually,
3 very hard for me. Until now, it's haunted me, and all
4 these questions, it's still going in my head. How?
5 Why? When? How come? Because it was just normal.
6 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay. Well, five more minutes and then
7 we'll have a break for lunch.

8 MR GREANEY: Let's just deal with one point in the
9 chronology and then we'll break. Following your arrest
10 and charge in November 2014, were you initially remanded
11 into custody at Belmarsh?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. Did you have visitors whilst you were there?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. And do you remember, as it seems you do from something
16 you said to the chairman a moment ago, that on
17 26 February of 2015, you were visited by Salman Abedi
18 together with Ahmed Taghdi?

19 A. I was on remand, yes.

20 Q. You were on remand at that stage and in Belmarsh.

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. And Taghdi, as you've told us, is someone that had
23 fought in Libya, as you had. Why did those two men
24 visit you on that occasion?

25 A. It was -- as I went to prison, it's just normal visit,

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1 basically. It took time for me. I was cat A first and
2 then were changed to cat B and then it became easier for
3 people to come and see me. The first two people who
4 came to see me was Salman and Ahmed Taghdi, and they
5 came to see how I'm doing. "What's going on? How's
6 prison? How's your health?" Normal chit-chat; how it
7 was going on and what's going to happen and this and
8 that.

9 Also, I had other friends who came to visit me as
10 well in Belmarsh. It was just everyone trying to come
11 and visit me, but those friends were -- actually
12 couldn't make it because they got stopped in the
13 motorway because of a car crash and the governor told me
14 that they just called and they can't make it because the
15 motorway, it was all shut down, basically.

16 Q. Did you -- there was a lot going on in the world by
17 February 2015. The caliphate had been declared and
18 people had been travelling to Syria for extremist
19 purposes, as you of course knew. And was politics
20 discussed between you and Taghdi and Abedi on
21 26 February?

22 A. You're right, there's a lot going on in the world at the
23 time, but there was more going on in my head at the time
24 than the world or politics, whatever is going on in the
25 world. I got imprisoned and I'm trying to sort out my

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1 health issues, trying to sort out my health rights and
 2 everything, so I was more busy with myself, as I was
 3 trying to get my rights as a disabled person in prison.
 4 Q. Did you discuss religion with Salman Abedi and Mr Taghdi
 5 on that occasion?
 6 A. Meaning? We are Muslims, so we don't ...
 7 Q. Did you discuss your own religious views, what you
 8 thought about the world, with the men on that occasion?
 9 A. No, no, no. As I said, I was more busy with myself,
 10 basically. I had a lot on my mind.
 11 Q. That's what I wanted to ask you about the February
 12 visit. I wonder whether you feel able to bear with me
 13 just for another few minutes whilst we reach
 14 a particular point that it would be helpful to reach.
 15 A. Go ahead, no problem.
 16 Q. On 29 July 2015, do you agree you were bailed to
 17 a particular address?
 18 A. My mum's address. The same address I ---
 19 Q. I don't want to know about particular addresses, and
 20 that's out of fairness to you. From what you've said,
 21 was that address in South Manchester?
 22 A. Yes. Moss Side.
 23 Q. Thereafter, you were seen regularly with Salman Abedi
 24 and also with Hashem Abedi in the South Manchester area.
 25 A. That is --- the first one is correct. The second one is

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1 incorrect. I haven't seen Hashem. I don't see Hashem
 2 because Hashem was gang banging anyway against the other
 3 Moss Side young lads fighting each other, Moss Side
 4 Blood and Crips, whatever they are. But see, with
 5 Hashem, yes, I was --- when I was on bail, my friends
 6 used to come and take me out of the house. I was not
 7 particularly with Salman, Salman, Salman.
 8 Q. No.
 9 A. I was with all my friends. Every day there was, like,
 10 ten of us out because we lived near each other and we're
 11 close to each other, and they were taking me --- making
 12 sure that I come out of the house and ---
 13 Q. So the position in summary is that you do agree that you
 14 spent time with Salman Abedi once you had been bailed,
 15 but with other people as well. That's the point you're
 16 making.
 17 A. I was spending time with my friends, basically.
 18 Q. I'm certain you'll be aware that there is a picture
 19 within the evidence that over this period in 2015,
 20 Salman Abedi was changing his attitude to life, and by
 21 that I mean he stopped partying and stopped taking
 22 drugs. He became more religious over that period, and
 23 you were spending time with him as that was happening in
 24 his life.
 25 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay. Are you all right? Do you want

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1 to stop? I think it would be a good idea to break for
 2 lunch now.
 3 MR GREANEY: We'll break for lunch there.
 4 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you. I'll go and you can be taken
 5 out.
 6 (1.30 pm)
 7 (The lunch adjournment)
 8 (2.30 pm)
 9 (Delay in proceedings)
 10 (2.35 pm)
 11 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Are you okay?
 12 A. Yes.
 13 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: It's all right. We're perfectly happy
 14 for you to scratch your back.
 15 MR GREANEY: You let me know when you're ready to carry on.
 16 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay?
 17 A. Yes, [REDACTED]
 18 [REDACTED]
 19 MR GREANEY: As the chairman has explained, if at any stage
 20 you need a break, I've no doubt you will let us know.
 21 A. Much appreciated, thank you.
 22 Q. We have dealt now with your contact in November 2014
 23 with Salman Abedi and we have dealt also with the visit
 24 he made to you together with Mr Taghdi on
 25 26 February 2015. As you'll remember, we were just

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1 dealing with the period after you had been bailed on
 2 29 July 2015.
 3 A. Yes.
 4 Q. You were on bail for a period of, well, exactly
 5 50 weeks. So you were bailed on 29 July 2015 ---
 6 A. Yes.
 7 Q. --- and you went inside to start serving your sentence on
 8 15 July 2016. I was drawing to your attention something
 9 that you may well have noted yourself in the evidence;
 10 that there is evidence from people who knew Salman Abedi
 11 that over that period, 2015 to 2016, he changed his
 12 lifestyle and became more religious, both in outlook and
 13 indeed in dress. Do you agree that over that period,
 14 when you were out and spending time with him, he became
 15 more religious?
 16 A. In terms of more religious, it's not that he became more
 17 religious, it's --- the fact is I did see a good side of
 18 him, which he stopped drinking and the drugs and
 19 everything and he started praying and he started
 20 focusing more on his college and university and was
 21 saying, "Ah, I need to graduate to please my mum and
 22 everything". And I was very happy for him, like, he was
 23 growing up and seeing that he was getting more mature
 24 and I was very happy for him. That's good.
 25 Q. As the chairman indicated, it's very helpful to have

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1 your insight because you were there during this period.
 2 So you're agreeing with the other witnesses that there
 3 was certainly a change in him, that he stopped his
 4 partying lifestyle and taking drugs?
 5 A. Yes, he stopped the drugs and the party life and
 6 started, like -- as I said, probably growing up and
 7 getting more mature --
 8 Q. Started praying more?
 9 A. Well, you can't pray more, basically .
 10 Q. All right.
 11 A. There's only five prayers a day, so --
 12 Q. He took it more seriously than he had done previously.
 13 A. Probably. You could say he started praying more to God
 14 and everything, yes.
 15 Q. Do you remember that he seemed to start dressing in
 16 a different way over that period?
 17 A. Sometimes, yes, he -- well, he wasn't dressing in
 18 a different way. He just -- basically, when his Friday
 19 prayer, for example, like me and everyone else, we just
 20 wear our culture clothes, which is the Libyan -- it's
 21 like a shalwar kameez in the Asian way, but the Libyan
 22 version, and we'll go to the mosque and everything.
 23 Q. In terms of this change or these changes, obviously
 24 there are a number of possibilities . One is that he
 25 changed and it was nothing to do with you. Another

1 is that he changed and it was because of your influence
 2 on him, and another is that he changed and it was
 3 a combination of you and other things. Are you able to
 4 give us your view on what it was that caused this change
 5 in Salman Abedi during 2015/16?
 6 A. I believe it was his mum. It was his mum, basically,
 7 you know, telling him off and everything, you know,
 8 "Grow up. You need to grow up. Stop this rubbish life.
 9 When are you going to grow up. When you get married, do
 10 you think if you continue" -- you know, like we say in
 11 Arabic, no one's going to accept you, give you their
 12 daughter or anything like that.
 13 So he started thinking about life and everything and
 14 taking it more seriously as he's growing up, and as you
 15 grew up, more responsibility in life and it gets
 16 serious, and that's what he was more focused on.
 17 I was -- as I said, I was very happy with him and I was,
 18 basically -- I did say to him, "That's very good, please
 19 your mum, innit". That's ...
 20 Q. So did you -- and there's no edge to this question --
 21 encourage him in these changes that were occurring under
 22 his mother's influence?
 23 A. I did -- I did tell him -- I did tell him to stop drugs
 24 and doing drugs, as he was very heavy on drugs at the
 25 time, as I also do with my other friends who were

1 basically doing drugs or whatever, weed or something
 2 like that, same thing. But that doesn't stop me from
 3 talking to them or anything like that. They are my
 4 friends. So I did the same thing what I did to Salman
 5 with my friends. "You need to grow up, you need to" --
 6 you know, how you say, like, we were in our 20s and we
 7 need to grow up and ...
 8 Q. Anyone can change and I can understand that. It might
 9 be what's important is the way in which people change.
 10 Was Salman Abedi, during this period when he stopped his
 11 partying and so on, also starting to express more
 12 extreme ideas about religious and world politics?
 13 A. I was with Salman and -- whenever he was free,
 14 basically, because he was in college and he was doing
 15 his own business. So whenever he was free, he used to
 16 come to Moss Side where we lived, me and all of my
 17 friends and everything. We haven't seen any side of him
 18 to show that he had any extreme views, anything like
 19 that. But he did speak just normally, like us, about,
 20 as I said -- or sometimes a new thing that's happened in
 21 Libya or anything that happened in Syria new, anything
 22 like that. Just normal chit-chat, basically.
 23 Q. So if, over this time, Salman Abedi was on his path to
 24 extremism and such a level of extremism that he carried
 25 out this appalling attack, if he was on that path, that

1 was not something that you noticed?
 2 A. I mean, if he was at that time, I mean, I wish if --
 3 I wish I would have -- I wish, if I knew, noticed about
 4 it. Then I would have done something about it. But the
 5 problem is that nobody had seen any, like, side of him
 6 that shows it was serious, from me and my friends and
 7 everything.
 8 We were -- just chilling with us and chit-chatting
 9 and having fun, and whether we were indoors before the
 10 arrest or anything, we were cooking food. As you've
 11 probably seen a message, we were cooking food, Libyan
 12 dishes, having a laugh, chit-chat, joking, and it was
 13 normal, like, joking about. One day he was a sending
 14 a picture of muscles(?).
 15 So I didn't see anything that is concerning or
 16 anything like that. It was just normal, looked -- acted
 17 normal or anything. And if he was, he probably -- he
 18 concealed it very well from us, basically .
 19 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Well, just trying to look at it from
 20 just a slightly different angle to this, perhaps --
 21 MR GREANEY: Of course.
 22 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: -- you'd been arrested for offences
 23 which you told us you did not commit. Yes? I don't
 24 need to -- you were arrested for something you hadn't
 25 done. That's what you've told us.

1 A. I mean, I did commit, but it wasn't in that fact. It
2 was a different thing.

3 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay. You were locked up in Belmarsh
4 for a while. Being someone in a wheelchair, I suspect
5 that was rather more difficult. Quite difficult for
6 anyone to be locked up, but in a wheelchair, it probably
7 made it worse for you?

8 A. Yes, indeed, it probably made it worse. It was very
9 hard, as my solicitors were fighting on my behalf to get
10 my normal basic rights, basically.

11 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Were you angry about this?

12 A. Was I angry? I was actually frustrated and angry, yes.

13 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Did you convey this to friends like
14 Salman?

15 A. My friends were coming and asking me, "How's your
16 health? What's going on?", this and that, basically,
17 progress. And I did speak to my friends and my mum,
18 family, just getting out of your chest, basically, how
19 I felt and --

20 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay.

21 A. -- how -- how it was and everything.

22 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: You also felt, you've told us, that the
23 British Government had a different view on Libya and
24 Syria and this you found very odd.

25 A. Yes.

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1 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay. Did you convey all that to
2 Salman? Did he agree with you about that?

3 A. Not ... no, no.

4 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I'm not being critical, I'm just trying
5 to find out what happened.

6 A. No, no, I didn't -- I didn't really speak. I mean, the
7 fact is your solicitor always advises you to not talk
8 about your cases, you know what I mean? So in terms of
9 what I said before, that was actually in my head myself,
10 you know what I mean, and I was trying to understand,
11 asking my solicitors the questions.

12 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Do you think he was developing or may
13 have been developing a hatred for this country in part
14 because of the treatment he perceived you had had?

15 A. Not really, because according to the Sunday article
16 in the news, and what his sister said, he said that's
17 because of the --

18 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Actually, I'm just not really interested
19 in what his sister said at the moment. I'm interested
20 in what you can help us with now, looking back; whether
21 you think that may have some part in the explanation for
22 this extraordinary thing that happened.

23 A. It's not -- to be honest, it's not a major thing that --
24 comparing to what he said to his sister or whatever --
25 how -- whatever he said to his sister; that he's doing

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1 it in revenge because of the killing that is going on in
2 Syria and Iraq and the British Government involvement in
3 it. So logically, basically, if you're saying
4 extraordinary, that is more extraordinary and that's
5 what he thought he was doing, basically.

6 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: He wouldn't be the only Muslim who had
7 those views about the killings going on in Syria, would
8 he?

9 A. Yes, I had it myself.

10 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Yes. And did people consider, people
11 you were talking to, young men perhaps, "Well, they're
12 killing our young out in Syria, quite unnecessarily,
13 we're going to do it to them", as a means maybe of
14 self-defence? Was that being said?

15 A. No. The fact is, just explaining Islamically as well,
16 that regardless of basically what is happening, I myself
17 was upset and frustrated and also angry that innocents
18 are getting killed, basically, but that doesn't give us
19 the right to go and kill innocent people or even call it
20 jihad at all, and it's got nothing to do with
21 self-defend or anything.

22 Even the soldier who's, for example, been in the
23 front line of bombarding in Syria, for example, Libya,
24 Iraq or anything, if he was not in the land of the
25 battlefield where the battlefield is happening on that

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1 circle, if he was in this -- for example, if he was
2 a British soldier and in this country, that does not
3 make him a target --

4 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: No.

5 A. -- even though -- if he is --

6 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Can I just summarise? Among your group,
7 which would include Salman, there was a feeling that
8 what the allies were doing in Syria, by the bombing they
9 did and the people who died out there, that you were
10 angry about that, but that your religion would not allow
11 you to take action yourself in revenge for it?

12 A. Yes, the fact is we don't -- we're not even allowed or
13 we don't have anything called revenge in Islam,
14 basically. That is human nature, what they do. They
15 take up on their own feelings and they act upon it, and
16 that is nothing to do with the religion itself.
17 I myself, like, was frustrated and angry and I was
18 thinking you can't sacrifice an innocent blood to gain
19 what you want.

20 I mean, the fact is, to be honest, the fact and the
21 truth of the matter is, at that time, everyone was
22 killing everyone. I mean, Assad was one of the most
23 people who killed hundreds and thousands of people.
24 ISIS were killing everyone at the time as well. Other
25 groups were killing each other at the time as well. So

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1 it was, as we say in Libyan, a word called [Arabic
2 spoken], which means a cocktail, basically.
3 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I don't want to extend this any more
4 than is necessary —
5 A. Yes.
6 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: — but the views that you say, according
7 to the newspapers, Salman was expressing to his
8 sister —
9 A. I've read that, yeah.
10 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: — were never expressed to you? He
11 never said anything like that to you?
12 A. He has never — he has never, ever said to me that this
13 is — that he was basically doing a revenge or these
14 guys are this or that and that. I don't recall anything
15 like that, saying that to me, and if he did and
16 I've seen any slight of that thingy myself, the truth of
17 the matter is me and my boys will actually slap the hell
18 out of him if we'd seen that side of him before we knew
19 what he was thinking. We'd have told his mum
20 straightaway.
21 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Yes, so let's make this absolutely
22 clear. Your view is, as is all of ours, that is
23 entirely wrong? You can answer "yes", if you like.
24 A. Of course. I mean, this is more than 110%, actually.
25 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Yes, thank you.

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1 A. And that's why, just to say, it's very hard for me until
2 now to understand why and how and what's gone — and to
3 be honest, it's very hard for me because he's my friend.
4 I feel like because ISIS claimed it afterwards, I feel
5 like he's been kidnapped by ISIS and they used him
6 and —
7 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay. I'm going to stop you for
8 a minute because you're speculating now and we don't
9 want to go down that line.
10 MR GREANEY: I just want to ask you about one further aspect
11 of this period, July 15 to July 16, and then I'll move
12 on. The inquiry has heard about a man called
13 Raphael Hostey, who lived, I think, in South Manchester
14 and who, in 2013, travelled to Syria to join
15 Islamic State and remained there until he was killed in,
16 I think, March 2016. Was Raphael Hostey someone that
17 you knew or knew of?
18 A. Yes, I knew of Raphael. I've seen him in the —
19 I've seen him in the Moss Side mosque a couple of times
20 in Ramadan before. Even when we were teenagers,
21 I've seen him, basically, before as well.
22 Q. Did you become aware that he had travelled to Syria for
23 extremist purposes?
24 A. Yes, I do recall, actually, remembering that Raphael had
25 gone on the news, basically.

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1 Q. And as is widely known, he was injured and so could not
2 fight and he became a very prominent propagandist for
3 Islamic State, recruiting people from, in the end, all
4 over the world, but including from your community.
5 When you were having discussions within your group,
6 including Salman, over this period of time, did the name
7 of Raphael Hostey ever crop up?
8 A. No, no. Raphael ... it came up once or twice when we
9 heard about him in Syria and joining ISIS and I remember
10 in Moss Side in summertime talking, me and my friends,
11 boys, like, "What's going on with Raph?" Like, he was
12 normally — just one day he was chilling, partying and
13 everything. Next thing you know he's in Syria with
14 ISIS. So it was another thing that we didn't
15 understand.
16 Q. He wasn't just with ISIS. There came a time when he was
17 actively trying to recruit to ISIS people from within
18 your community.
19 A. Yes.
20 Q. And you knew that?
21 A. Yes, that is true, I knew that.
22 Q. What was the attitude of your group and of you towards
23 Raphael Hostey and what he was doing?
24 A. To be honest, he was — we didn't — when he started,
25 basically, when I've seen the news that he was actually

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1 one of the toppest groomers, actually, using — we
2 thought like, as we say, the man had lost the plot,
3 innit.
4 Q. Do you remember whether Salman ever said anything about
5 Raphael Hostey in the discussions that you and he had
6 about Syria?
7 A. Salman himself, I mean, when we spoke about Raph, when
8 we heard about him, he was just quiet. He didn't say
9 anything or say much. But what I know is that Salman
10 used to chill with Raph before and he knew his little
11 brother as well.
12 Q. Right. So, so far as you knew, Salman had actually
13 known Raphael Hostey and knew his younger brother as
14 well?
15 A. Yes, and he was very close to one of his cousins as
16 well, as he was close to Salman.
17 Q. Well, that is, or may be, a helpful piece of the jigsaw,
18 thank you.
19 Now we'll move on in time because on, as
20 I've indicated, 15 July 2016, you were sentenced and
21 began to serve your sentence at Belmarsh; is that
22 correct?
23 A. Yes.
24 Q. According to the records, on 6 December 2016, you were
25 transferred to Altcourse Prison in Liverpool, and do you

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1 agree?
 2 A. Yes.
 3 Q. Whilst there, did you have a telephone, prison
 4 telephone, so a legitimate telephone, in your cell?
 5 A. Yes.
 6 Q. Were you able to use that phone from the morning until
 7 10.00 in the evening if you wished?
 8 A. Yes.
 9 Q. Did you know, however, that your use of that legitimate
 10 phone within the prison might be monitored by the
 11 authorities, the prison authorities?
 12 A. Oh, that's normal.
 13 Q. Everyone knows that?
 14 A. Everybody knows that, yes.
 15 Q. There are actually, as Mr Weatherby established, signs
 16 up within the jail that make it plain to you that your
 17 calls might be listened to.
 18 A. They tell you straightaway your phone calls are
 19 recorded.
 20 Q. So you obviously knew that anything you said on that
 21 phone, that legitimate phone in your cell, might be
 22 recorded and listened to?
 23 A. Yes, I knew that.
 24 Q. I'm sorry if I seem to be stating the obvious, but
 25 you'll understand, I know, where I'm driving towards.

1 A. Yes.
 2 Q. But obviously, if you spoke in your cell not on the
 3 prison phone but on an illicit phone, a phone that had
 4 been smuggled, in, a mobile phone, then you wouldn't
 5 expect that to be monitored and recorded, would you?
 6 A. Not really. From the prison itself it's not recorded,
 7 yes.
 8 Q. No.
 9 A. Well, from the company itself, it's probably recorded,
 10 everything.
 11 Q. That's what you think. But is it the position that you
 12 acquired one of those illicit phones, so a phone, mobile
 13 phone, smuggled into the prison?
 14 A. Yes, at the time when I got to Altcourse, I met someone
 15 that -- he knows my friends from Birmingham, and then he
 16 became my carer. He had a -- he managed to get a phone
 17 and we were -- we were both using it.
 18 Q. And do you agree that on occasion, on that phone, the
 19 illicit phone, you spoke to Salman Abedi?
 20 A. Yes. My -- what do you call it, the phone that I had,
 21 my carer that was with me at the time, he was gone, so
 22 I kept the phone. It was with me, and I needed the
 23 phone because of a lot of things was happening mentally
 24 and physically to me at the time; the medical neglect of
 25 basic things, no care or nothing. I had to pay people

1 to clean myself, everything. I had to pay people.
 2 So I used the phone to keep myself occupied, and
 3 I did call Salman and I did call a lot of my friends.
 4 Even -- if we go to the disclosure of the phone calls,
 5 he only answers my phone calls twice, in January. Only
 6 twice. And since January, I've never called him or
 7 spoken to him at all.
 8 Q. On that phone, that's certainly true. But I do want to
 9 ask you about those occasions on which you spoke to him.
 10 The record shows, I'm certain you'll agree, that on
 11 16 January 2017 at 11.25 in the morning, you spoke to
 12 him or at least had contact with his phone for
 13 four minutes and 28 seconds. Do you agree?
 14 A. Yes.
 15 Q. And obviously, it being just before 11.30 in the
 16 morning, that was a time at which you could, if you'd
 17 wished, have used the legitimate prison phone in your
 18 cell.
 19 A. You're right, because the phone that I had, which is the
 20 mobile, it was free minutes, and the phone from the
 21 prison actually was quite expensive because it's
 22 a private prison, so I just kept using the mobile phone
 23 that I had, and I was calling even my family with
 24 private number and telling them that's the prison phone
 25 and calling anyone, basically, all my friends and

1 anyone. So if you look at the phone calls, I called
 2 Salman, he doesn't answer. Then I call another person,
 3 he doesn't answer. I call someone else.
 4 So at the time, I called Salman. He answered me,
 5 "Oh, how are you doing? You all right? Yeah, college,
 6 blah blah." Chit-chat, "How's your health? What's
 7 going on? What's going on in prison?" This and that.
 8 Q. On 24 January 2017, you made contact with his phone at
 9 eight minutes past 9.00 in the evening and that contact
 10 lasted for four minutes and 17 seconds. And again,
 11 I'm sure you'll agree, although your explanation may
 12 well be the same, that that call was made at a time at
 13 which you could have used the legitimate prison phone in
 14 your cell?
 15 A. Yes. I was actually -- as I said, it was quite
 16 expensive, the phone. Calling the mobiles was very,
 17 very expensive, and I would rather buy canteen and food,
 18 canteen and food and -- rather than wasting my money on
 19 credit, if I had a free phone. Free credit, I mean.
 20 Q. I need to ask you this and if I don't, someone else
 21 will. Is the reason why you made those calls on the
 22 illicit phone rather than the real phone because you
 23 were talking about something that you did not want to be
 24 recorded?
 25 A. No, not really, because I was talking to my family, my

1 mum, my dad, my sisters, my friends, all in the same
 2 phone.
 3 Q. Now, during this period --
 4 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Are you moving away from the phone?
 5 MR GREANEY: No, I'm still sticking with that phone. I just
 6 have a few more questions.
 7 During this period in January of 2017, we know, or
 8 at any rate the chairman may well find, that
 9 Salman Abedi was involved in active attack planning
 10 because, in particular, we know on 18 January,
 11 an attempt to acquire precursor materials was made and
 12 indeed at the back--end of 2016, another item used in the
 13 bomb was acquired.
 14 A. Yes.
 15 Q. So when you spoke to him on these occasions, he was, it
 16 seems, actively attack planning. What did the two of
 17 you discuss?
 18 A. As I said, nothing much. It was just catching up
 19 because I haven't spoken to him for probably a couple of
 20 days or a week or something like that, and just catching
 21 up. "How are you doing? Are you all right? What's
 22 going on?" And he just comforted me, "How was prison
 23 and how's your sentence? What's the next move", and
 24 this and that. "What do you have to do?" Just normal
 25 chit--chat.

1 According to the materials that you just mentioned,
 2 the first time I've heard about it is from the Sunday
 3 article, which my friend from next door neighbour or
 4 my -- next door, next cell to my left actually gave me
 5 that news -- that Sunday article and I've read all about
 6 the information that was in the Sunday article, and that
 7 was the first time I hear about it --
 8 Q. I'm so sorry, I talked across you. You've probably
 9 answered my next question.
 10 A. Yeah, which is the Devell House and the car and,
 11 basically, the acid, yes, that was bought.
 12 Q. Did he in those calls, either of them, say anything to
 13 you about his plans, whether specifically or in general
 14 terms?
 15 A. No, he didn't at all. The fact is that when I've -- the
 16 fact is when I've seen the Sunday article and I've seen
 17 50 litres, I was talking to my friend -- I don't want to
 18 mention his name -- on my left, reading it, like,
 19 50 litres and certain so litres and everything,
 20 I thought in my head, basically, well, didn't Amazon,
 21 basically -- because his cousin bought it for him and
 22 another person was involved buying it, and I thought
 23 who -- in his mind, basically, in the company of --
 24 because what -- after the bombing, what happened is that
 25 it was mentioned that Salman was on the radar and

1 getting watched. And I thought if he was getting
 2 watched and --
 3 Q. I'm going to ask you to pause. I'm going to ask --
 4 A. -- on the radar and everything and he was buying those
 5 materials, basically, isn't anyone --
 6 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay. Mr Abdallah, we obviously will
 7 look at all those matters, and we've heard evidence
 8 about them. And I understand why you're asking
 9 questions, but at the moment what we really want you to
 10 do is to answer questions about what you knew about
 11 at the time rather than your consideration of whether
 12 Amazon should have done more than they did and things
 13 like that, okay?
 14 A. No, actually, I'm telling you what was going on in my
 15 head at the time, yes.
 16 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: When you read the article?
 17 A. When I read the article, and that was what was going on
 18 in my head.
 19 MR GREANEY: So you have made clear that he didn't tell you
 20 anything about his plans. One final topic and then
 21 we'll move to another issue, subject to the chairman's
 22 questions.
 23 You knew this man, Salman Abedi, well by
 24 January 2017, didn't you?
 25 A. 2017, yes.

1 Q. We know that he must have been involved in attack
 2 planning by that stage. Did you get the merest hint
 3 from this man that you knew during either of those
 4 conversations that he was up to something?
 5 A. No. Even when he came to visit me in Altcourse, as
 6 you -- you're going to mention it anyway, when he came
 7 to see me with Ayoub and Elyas, and he was just acting
 8 normal and just having a laugh.
 9 Q. You've rightly predicted the next issue I'm going to
 10 turn to.
 11 Sir, did you have questions about the prison?
 12 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Just so everyone understands, the mobile
 13 phones you had possession of have been described as
 14 being illicit, so you're not allowed to have them in
 15 prison.
 16 A. Yes.
 17 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: It's contrary to prison rules and
 18 everybody knows that. If you get caught with a phone,
 19 then you get punished, presumably, do you?
 20 A. Yes.
 21 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: You say it's expensive, but, actually,
 22 you're running the risk of getting caught and being
 23 punished.
 24 A. I mean, the fact is, the prison did not take anything
 25 into consideration in terms of my health and mental

1 health, and my prison has written to the healthcare,
 2 what I was doing and everything, and unfortunately, it
 3 led me to self-harm myself and everything because
 4 I didn't have a carer, as I said, and the bullying that
 5 I was getting in Liverpool and the racism, comments in
 6 front of staff, and even in my wing, the staff was
 7 watching and they didn't do nothing. And I wasn't
 8 even -- I didn't even have a hospital bed for my back.
 9 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Does this relate to the mobile phone in
 10 some way?
 11 A. Yes, because --
 12 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: You're saying it's because you needed to
 13 be in contact with people?
 14 A. Because of all this, I've got -- my carer, before he
 15 left the prison, he left the phone with me. When
 16 I went -- when I got there, he actually had a phone and
 17 managed to get a phone before I got there. So he left
 18 it with me and I used it for my own good, for my own
 19 will, basically; calling my friends, talking to them,
 20 even at night-time, basically, and that was to just keep
 21 my mind actually busy and occupied.
 22 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I understand your explanation.
 23 Thank you.
 24 MR GREANEY: So let's deal finally, before, right at the
 25 end, I put some very open questions to you about your

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1 knowledge and conduct, with 18 January 2017 because that
 2 was a day, do you agree, upon which Salman Abedi visited
 3 you?
 4 A. Yes.
 5 Q. And it was also, in fact, the very day of a request by
 6 Hashem Abedi for the acquisition of precursor materials.
 7 So as I've said, there is active attack planning
 8 occurring. And on this occasion, what did you and
 9 Salman Abedi discuss, now in person?
 10 A. In person. He came with, as I said, Mr Elyas Elmehdi
 11 and Ayoub Sadigh, which is another two close of my
 12 friend and similar age. I remember we were just having
 13 a laugh because Salman was basically telling me,
 14 basically, how mad Elyas was driving on the motorway and
 15 saying, "He nearly killed me", and this and that. So
 16 they were both teasing him and we were just having
 17 a laugh and chit-chat and catching up, to be honest.
 18 Q. Did he say anything to you to indicate that he was
 19 planning an attack?
 20 A. No, not at all.
 21 Q. Did you develop any suspicion, as a result of how he was
 22 or what he said, that he was planning an attack?
 23 A. Not at all. I was busy with myself in prison, you know.
 24 All I wanted is to see my friends physically as well,
 25 just to speak with them and keep my mind busy and

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1 everything, because I didn't have no one in the wing
 2 that I was in, in Altcourse.
 3 Q. So let me finally, before I invite questions from
 4 others, ask you a series of open questions to enable you
 5 to give such answer as you wish to give.
 6 Did you know before 22 May 2017 that Salman Abedi
 7 intended an attack at Manchester Arena or anywhere?
 8 A. Not at all.
 9 Q. Did you suspect that he intended an attack?
 10 A. Not at all. I mean, just to clarify that, from the
 11 start I said, basically, as you know, I'm a Muslim and
 12 I take my religion seriously when we swear by God, and
 13 I say that again [Arabic spoken], in Arabic, and I swear
 14 by God that I didn't have no knowledge or idea or
 15 anything about the attack, which is a horrific act,
 16 actually, that happened in Manchester.
 17 Q. Did you play a part in radicalising Salman Abedi into
 18 his extremist world view?
 19 A. Not at all. As I said, my views were just against the
 20 dictators of our countries and what they were doing in
 21 our countries, and what is Salman's views, as we know
 22 now, after he made his attack, it's ... it's very ...
 23 it's just very hard for me until now to actually
 24 believe, believe that that was him and he would do such
 25 an act like that.

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1 MR GREANEY: Mr Abdallah, those are my questions, certainly
 2 at this stage. I'm going to invite Mr Weatherby, who
 3 represents some of the bereaved families, to pose his
 4 questions.
 5 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: If I may ask one question first. We
 6 heard earlier this week from another witness, who you
 7 may have actually watched, who indicated that he had had
 8 a phone call from Libya from Salman Abedi, and I know
 9 it's much later than any contact that you had with
 10 Salman Abedi, but which he has interpreted with
 11 hindsight was Salman Abedi saying goodbye to him.
 12 Anything like that happen to you? Did Salman Abedi ever
 13 say goodbye to you or looking back, do you think he was
 14 ever saying anything like that?
 15 A. No, he didn't. He did not at all. I mean, you actually
 16 reminded me of that phone call. You reminded me of that
 17 phone call that I had with that person, basically. And
 18 I mean, no, you reminded me that he was in Libya at the
 19 time and when I heard his name on the radio, I spoke to
 20 my friend Elyas and I was upset and crying on the phone
 21 and saying to him in Arabic, like, "What the F
 22 happened", basically. "I thought he was in Libya. How
 23 did that happen", and everything.
 24 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.
 25 Mr Weatherby.

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1 MR GREANEY: Could I invite Mr Weatherby to identify a point
2 at about probably 3.35 for a break, please?
3 MR WEATHERBY: May I just have one word with Mr Greaney
4 about a detail?
5 (Pause)
6 A. To be honest, you said this week there was an earlier
7 witness that mentioned that Salman indicated like he was
8 saying goodbye?
9 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: No, what he said was, looking back at it
10 now and knowing what had happened, he interpreted that
11 phone call coming from Libya to him, he thinks, but it's
12 only with the benefit of hindsight --
13 A. Okay.
14 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: -- that what he was doing was saying
15 goodbye to his old friend.
16 A. Okay, because he didn't tell us -- I mean, now he knows,
17 but at the time he didn't understand, okay.
18 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: No, it's looking back on it with the
19 benefit --
20 A. Looking back. Yes, Mr Alzoubare, Mohammed Alzoubare,
21 yes. Okay.
22 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Mr Weatherby. Thank you.
23 Questions from MR WEATHERBY
24 MR WEATHERBY: Mr Abdallah, as you just heard, I represent
25 some of the families and I've got some questions for

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1 you.
2 Can I start by asking whether you would agree that
3 the Manchester bombing was an inhuman and barbaric act?
4 A. I mean, there's actually more words to describe it, how
5 horrific it was, and more than barbaric and inhumane,
6 and you could carry on and carry on.
7 Q. I just really wanted a simple answer, if that's okay.
8 Would you agree with that; it was inhuman and barbaric?
9 A. As I said, yes, and worse.
10 Q. And it's not defensible on any basis --
11 A. It has --
12 Q. -- in terms of religion or anything else.
13 A. No, that's what gets me angry. It has nothing to do
14 with Islam or defence of Islam or anything. That is
15 an act of a person's own will and his own emotions or
16 whatever was going on in his head at that time.
17 Q. Now, you've -- sorry, I thought you'd finished.
18 A. No, it's okay.
19 Q. I think you've told us, but again can I just clarify,
20 that you reject both the views and the activities of
21 Islamic State and other groups such as Al-Qaeda? Have
22 I understood you rightly?
23 A. Yes.
24 Q. Has that always been your position?
25 A. Not really, to be -- no, because when Islamic State

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1 first came out, what happened, they came out from Iraq
2 and they had that much power and they were fighting
3 Assad and they were fighting the regime, and the Syrians
4 welcomed them and they were happy, and they were saying
5 that, "We're here for our brothers and sisters. We are
6 here for you guys to help you against this dictator."
7 And then step-by-step, basically, as time was going on
8 and everything, you started seeing certain action going
9 on.
10 Q. Okay. I'm not going to engage with you about the rights
11 and wrongs of that, but again to clarify, can I glean
12 from that that you had a different view of Islamic State
13 in the past? You don't support its views or activities
14 now, but you had a different view in the past; is that
15 right?
16 A. I didn't have a 100% view of them. I didn't know who
17 they were or any of the other groups over there at the
18 time. I was interested and I wanted to understand and
19 learn and basically understand what was really going on
20 in the land of Syria.
21 Q. I'll move on. Mr Greaney has asked you whether you
22 played any part in this plot and you've denied that. In
23 terms of encouraging others, we've heard that you've got
24 a close association with Mr Taghdi. Did you encourage
25 Mr Taghdi to assist the Abedis?

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1 A. I mean, the first thing of the question is I don't even
2 know that he assisted. If he did assist --
3 Q. Okay.
4 A. -- the first I've heard from you, to be honest.
5 Q. He says entirely innocently, to be fair to him, but he
6 assisted them to buy the car where the bomb components
7 were stored, moved and stored.
8 A. Yes, I've seen that in the Sunday article, yeah --
9 Q. Did you know about that and did you encourage him to
10 assist them?
11 A. Not -- not at all. The first time I heard about it
12 actually was just a few moments before the inquiry, when
13 seeing that Sunday article.
14 Q. Mr Elmehdi, Elyas Elmehdi, that you have described as
15 somebody who's a close friend of yours, is that right?
16 A. Yes.
17 Q. Again, we've heard that he helped them in terms of
18 parking the car out of the way; again, he told the
19 police, innocently. Did you encourage Mr Elmehdi to
20 assist the Abedis?
21 A. Not at all. Again, not at all. I didn't know anything
22 about the car or any purchase or anything. In terms of
23 Mr Taghdi, he's actually -- he's older than me and,
24 actually, he is a close friend of mine. He's mature and
25 everything. In terms of Elyas, basically, as you

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1 already know, basically, or the police know, he was just
 2 a drug dealer and he was dealing with drugs and
 3 everything.
 4 Q. We've heard from Alzoubare Mohammed, another close
 5 friend of yours, yes?
 6 A. Yes.
 7 Q. And in fact, on the evidence we've heard,
 8 Alzoubare Mohammed and Elyas Elmehdi were the last
 9 two UK associates of Salman Abedi that there is evidence
 10 that he had contact with on 15 May. You spoke to
 11 Alzoubare Mohammed between 20 and 22 May. Did you talk
 12 about Salman Abedi and the call that he'd made to
 13 Alzoubare on 15 May?
 14 A. Not really. We didn't -- I mean, not really. We didn't
 15 talk about him at all, actually. We were having --
 16 we were having a kind of good time, basically. I was
 17 talking to Alzoubare and they were partying in the house
 18 and I was on loudspeaker and everyone was talking and
 19 shouting; I mean, all my friends from Moss Side,
 20 Manchester, and everywhere. They were drinking and
 21 partying and sometimes the phone was getting passed from
 22 someone to someone, "How you doing? How you keeping
 23 up?"
 24 Q. Yes, okay. A number of different -- I'll come back to
 25 them in a while. But with Alzoubare Mohammed, you had

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1 a series of fairly lengthy phone calls between 20 and
 2 22 May before the bombing.
 3 A. Yes.
 4 Q. No mention at all that he'd spoken to Salman Abedi
 5 a couple of days before from Libya?
 6 A. I said to you they were partying and drinking, so there
 7 was a bit of -- more than tipsy, so ...
 8 Q. On any view, the people that Mr Abedi was in contact
 9 with, as we know, closest to the bombing, people who did
 10 do things that assisted the plot, even though they say
 11 innocently, these are all close associates of yours,
 12 aren't they? Your boys, I think was the term that you
 13 used earlier.
 14 A. I mean, you said that Taghdi was involved, but he said
 15 no, and Alzoubare, what did Alzoubare do?
 16 Q. I think I've put it as fairly as I ought to. I'll move
 17 on.
 18 I want to -- you've been asked recently a lot of
 19 questions about illicit phones. I just want to make one
 20 or two further points with you about that. Firstly,
 21 that you spoke to Salman Abedi in January on the illicit
 22 phone and your explanation was that that was -- it was
 23 cheaper than using the prison phone.
 24 A. Yes.
 25 Q. You'd actually used the prison phone in Belmarsh to

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1 phone Salman Abedi on a number of occasions, hadn't you?
 2 A. Yes.
 3 Q. It wasn't that you just had this illicit phone, was it,
 4 because after the phone calls that you have been
 5 referred to, that illicit phone was taken by the prison
 6 authorities, wasn't it?
 7 A. Yes, and it was sent to the police as well.
 8 Q. But you then acquired another one in May, didn't you, or
 9 you had the use of one in May?
 10 A. Yes, I had the use of one. I can't remember when
 11 exactly, and that was the one -- you're talking about
 12 the lengthy phone call.
 13 Q. Yes. So you were risking, in fact, not just
 14 disciplinary charges, which could have left you spending
 15 longer in prison, but also in fact there is a criminal
 16 offence, isn't there, of possessing a mobile phone in
 17 a prison?
 18 A. Yes. There's a difference between Belmarsh and
 19 Altcourse. Belmarsh was a high security prison and
 20 there wasn't mobile phones as it was -- in Altcourse,
 21 actually, the officers of the prison were bringing us
 22 phones every week, brand new phones, and every type of
 23 phone that you need and drugs and (inaudible) and
 24 everything.
 25 Q. I don't think we need to get into that.

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1 A. No, it's not that we're getting into it; I'm answering
 2 your question why, because you mentioned in Belmarsh
 3 I was using the Belmarsh phone, the prison phone. But
 4 in Altcourse, the phones were like -- they were like
 5 grass, like everywhere. You could get a phone if you
 6 wanted to, you know what I mean? There was a lot of
 7 phones inside, and that is what happens and that's the
 8 truth of the matter.
 9 Q. As has been put to you, you were not going to be
 10 listened to, monitored, if you were on an illicit phone.
 11 It wasn't going to be recorded. But more than that, the
 12 trail wasn't going to get to your door if you used
 13 an illicit phone, was it? You knew that there would be
 14 a record of the prison phone calls, of the fact of
 15 calls, like we got from Belmarsh, but on an illicit
 16 phone, unless it was recovered from you, then there
 17 wouldn't be any trail to it.
 18 A. Yes, and the fact is it was recovered for me and took
 19 and the police searched it and everything, and there was
 20 nothing.
 21 Q. Well, the calls have been put to you, and Mr Greaney put
 22 them to you, on 16 January. On 18 January, as
 23 Mr Greaney put to you, that was the day when Mr Forjani
 24 purchased sulphuric acid.
 25 A. Yes, that's what I heard. That's what I've seen in the

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1 news.
 2 Q. And that day, you tried to call Salman Abedi. In fact,
 3 the call was only for seven seconds, but you tried to
 4 call him. Do you remember, did that go to voicemail
 5 or ...
 6 A. Yes, as I was given the disclosure -- I mean, I can't
 7 remember. It was ages ago. I was given disclosure the
 8 police gave us, and it's only -- he only answers me
 9 twice, and on that day that you mentioned, he didn't
 10 answer me. So -- and if you look at the phone calls,
 11 and let's be fair and let's be honest, I was just
 12 calling anyone. If Salman did not answer, so I just
 13 called someone else straightaway. If that person didn't
 14 answer, I was calling someone else straightaway.
 15 Q. So just a coincidence it happens to be the day that the
 16 Abedis get Alharth Forjani to purchase sulphuric acid?
 17 A. To be -- yes, actually, I don't know what the hell is
 18 going on outside, basically.
 19 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay. I think it's slightly in comment
 20 territory.
 21 MR WEATHERBY: Sorry?
 22 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: It's in comment territory rather than
 23 a question, if you don't mind me saying so.
 24 MR WEATHERBY: Yes, I'm moving on to the point in a moment.
 25 But, of course, that day, as again Mr Greaney's put

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1 to you, you then have the visit and you have told us
 2 nothing discussed about the sulphuric acid there. Yes?
 3 A. Not at all.
 4 Q. And then again, Mr Greaney put the call to you, but the
 5 next call, the second one that you obviously get through
 6 to Salman Abedi on, is on 24 January, and you talked to
 7 him for just under five minutes. The point I'm coming
 8 to here is that that's the day that the sulphuric acid
 9 is delivered to the Forjani home.
 10 A. Well, I don't have any idea about it and nothing was
 11 mentioned in the visit, as Ayoub and Elyas were
 12 questioned by the police as well.
 13 Q. So it's just a series of coincidences that you've called
 14 on a day when the sulphuric acid is purchased, you've
 15 called on a day when the sulphuric acid is delivered,
 16 just coincidence?
 17 A. And yes, it's a -- well, now I know it is coincidence,
 18 but if you look at the phone calls, I was just calling
 19 anyone. It's not like I was concentrating on Salman
 20 and, to be honest, it's like you're making it sound like
 21 he's my wife or something. I was calling my friends.
 22 Anyone who answers me, just answers me.
 23 Q. In fact, you're right that after that, it doesn't appear
 24 that you got through to Salman Abedi, but in fact there
 25 was a series of calls in February, before you lost the

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1 phone, on the 10th, 12th, 13th, 14th and 15th, and they
 2 were a very short duration.
 3 A. There was no answer.
 4 Q. No answer.
 5 A. It was voicemail.
 6 Q. What was it in February 2017, on those dates, that you
 7 were contacting Salman Abedi about?
 8 A. Say that again, in 2000 and?
 9 Q. 2017, in February, on those five dates in February.
 10 What were you trying to contact Salman Abedi about?
 11 A. No, I was just trying to find out why wasn't he
 12 answering.
 13 Q. On 6 March, Salman Abedi was booked in to visit you with
 14 Alzoubare Mohammed and another person. We don't need to
 15 mention his name.
 16 A. It's all right because it's already in the paper.
 17 [REDACTED]
 18 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay, stop. There are very good reasons
 19 for not mentioning his name, all right? So please just
 20 accept that from me and don't mention his name.
 21 A. It's mentioned in the papers and --
 22 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Well, maybe it is, but I'm asking you --
 23 in fact, I'm directing you -- not to mention it now. Do
 24 you understand? There are good legal reasons why not.
 25 Good. Thank you.

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1 MR WEATHERBY: So on that day, the other two attended, but
 2 Salman Abedi didn't attend. Do you know why he didn't
 3 attend?
 4 A. No, I don't know why he didn't attend at all, actually.
 5 I've spoken to [REDACTED], when he came, and Alzoubare --
 6 sorry, I spoken to the lads who came in, to the lads who
 7 came in, and they told me they were calling him all day
 8 and he didn't answer the phone at all. So they didn't
 9 wait for him, they just came straightaway.
 10 Q. And you were annoyed by the fact that he hadn't
 11 attended, weren't you? Why were you annoyed?
 12 A. Well, I was annoyed a bit because when I book a visit,
 13 I don't choose who to come. They tell me, basically.
 14 My friends will tell me, basically, "Book me and
 15 so--and--so". You're only allowed three adults and
 16 three children. So I let them choose who to book the
 17 visit and they do it. So I'll be fair with all of them.
 18 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Stop for a moment. Do we need anything
 19 done about that?
 20 MR GREANEY: It's being done, sir.
 21 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.
 22 MR WEATHERBY: I'm sorry, I did try to stop it.
 23 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: It's absolutely not your fault.
 24 MR WEATHERBY: I want to go back to the beginning and just
 25 fill in a few points which may not be entirely clear.

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1 I want to go back just to your background. You have
 2 told us that your families, your family and the Abedi
 3 family, were close while you were growing up in
 4 Manchester and of course you lived probably less than
 5 a mile apart. Is that geographically ---
 6 A. Not far away, yes.
 7 Q. When you were asked about your father and his links or
 8 not to the LIFG, you said that you had first heard about
 9 it from the papers and then you said that you knew about
 10 it from 2011 when you were in Libya.
 11 A. Yes. I said the term LIFG, I didn't know what the hell
 12 it was until my solicitor explained to me what it is.
 13 And the LIFG is called --- I mean, the term that we know
 14 in Arabic is [Arabic spoken], and I've known about them
 15 more after the revolution.
 16 Q. Yes, okay. You've also told us you were born in
 17 Peshawar in Pakistan and, in fact, we know from open
 18 source that some of the LIFG leadership fled Libya to go
 19 to just that place, Peshawar, and in some cases, had
 20 links with Al-Qaeda. Can you help us with any of that?
 21 Were any of your family involved in that, so far as you
 22 know?
 23 A. As far as I know, which I know my dad told me, he fled
 24 to country to country to country to country to country
 25 to get to UK.

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1 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay. Just at some stage, Mr Weatherby,
 2 would you supply me with the particular open source,
 3 because I think ---
 4 MR WEATHERBY: Yes. I think I've already put it to one of
 5 the witnesses ---
 6 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I've read most of the things you sent,
 7 but I may have momentarily forgotten that one.
 8 MR WEATHERBY: Yes, absolutely.
 9 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: There is open source and open source, as
 10 we're well aware.
 11 MR WEATHERBY: Absolutely, yes.
 12 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.
 13 MR WEATHERBY: Moving on swiftly, Salman Abedi in Libya in
 14 2011. Again, you've confirmed that you saw Salman Abedi
 15 in Libya when you were fighting with the 17th February
 16 Brigade, but you told us, I think, that you didn't see
 17 Salman Abedi fighting; is that right?
 18 A. I haven't seen him in the front line fighting, fighting,
 19 in the front line, to be honest.
 20 Q. Yes. I mean ---
 21 A. I know he helped in other ways, basically, at that time.
 22 Q. Yes. The photograph that Mr Greaney referred you to we
 23 know was taken on 17 August of 2011, and we know,
 24 I think, that you were injured, in fact three days
 25 before that, 14 August. So ---

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1 A. Give or take, yes.
 2 Q. That's in fact what you said at your trial. I think
 3 that is the right date.
 4 A. Okay, probably right, yeah.
 5 Q. So within a few days, the picture of Salman Abedi with
 6 the rifle and the Feb 17 Martyrs Brigade banner is very
 7 proximate to when you were there, isn't it? You were
 8 there very much at the same time as Salman Abedi?
 9 A. Yes, and as I said ...
 10 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Well, you said you saw him there.
 11 A. Yes, I've seen him. I've seen him outside my brigade,
 12 basically, which is the Tripoli Brigade.
 13 MR WEATHERBY: Yes, given that you were fighting and given
 14 that you've told us that Ramadan Abedi was involved in
 15 supporting the rebels, can you help us as to why
 16 Salman Abedi wouldn't have been fighting with you? Was
 17 there any reason you knew of as to why he wasn't?
 18 A. I was always in the front line because I was translating
 19 and also there was other foreigners, basically, with us
 20 who came from like Scotland and Australia and all that,
 21 fighting. So I stayed with them, basically, and some of
 22 my friends from Manchester. I didn't move, because they
 23 were our guests.
 24 Q. Okay.
 25 A. But I've seen Salman in Libya on the --- on --- basically,

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1 and I've not seen him on the front line fighting, but
 2 probably he did fight.
 3 Q. Okay. So you're saying you don't know rather than
 4 he wasn't?
 5 A. Yes.
 6 Q. Right.
 7 A. I don't know.
 8 Q. Okay. You've known Salman Abedi all your life, but
 9 obviously you saw him there in 2011 and then you've
 10 associated with him, as we've heard, a lot since 2011,
 11 between 2011 and 2017. Did you ever discuss with him
 12 what he did or didn't do in Libya and what you did in
 13 Libya?
 14 A. It's not a topic that actually we would like to discuss
 15 amongst ourselves because of the madness that we've seen
 16 and obviously, they're looking at me in a wheelchair and
 17 they're not going to remind me about Libya and the wars
 18 and everything.
 19 Q. So you never had a discussion about what he was doing
 20 whilst you weren't with him, but you were both in
 21 Tripoli or both in Libya? That's your evidence?
 22 A. Tripoli? I was --- I was not in Tripoli.
 23 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay. Mr Weatherby ---
 24 A. You've got it --- it's wrong. I got shot before ---
 25 before Tripoli.

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1 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: — we've gone over an hour. I made it
 2 clear that there should be regular breaks.
 3 MR WEATHERBY: Yes, of course.
 4 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Do we want 20 minutes again? Is that
 5 the minimum time, is it, really?
 6 MR GREANEY: I don't know the answer to that question, sir.
 7 Can you make do with 15 minutes or do you need
 8 20 minutes?
 9 A. I'll take 15/20 minutes. 15 minutes will be all right.
 10 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay. We'll try 15 minutes.
 11 Mr Weatherby, I just think in fairness to the
 12 witness and for anyone else who needs to make
 13 arrangements about tonight, it would be quite a nice
 14 idea to have some sort of idea of how long we're likely
 15 to go on, because we will be finishing this witness
 16 tonight.
 17 MR WEATHERBY: Yes, of course. I will certainly be
 18 three-quarters of an hour, if not another hour.
 19 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Right.
 20 MR GREANEY: I know Mr Cooper has some questions. He
 21 thought certainly at lunchtime 15 minutes.
 22 MR COOPER: I've been allocated that period. I may be
 23 shorter. In fact, as we go on, I'm reviewing my
 24 position, but no longer than that.
 25 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Let me encourage you to keep reviewing,

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1 Mr Cooper.
 2 MR COOPER: I will review away.
 3 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Just from my concentration point of
 4 view.
 5 MR GREANEY: As matters stand, I don't know if Mr Menon
 6 proposes — no.
 7 MR MENON: Unlikely.
 8 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Yes, okay. We'll see how we go. Right,
 9 okay. Let's take a quarter of an hour now and then we
 10 will be as quick as we can thereafter.
 11 (3.39 pm)
 12 (A short break)
 13 (3.55 pm)
 14 MR GREANEY: Sir, I believe before Mr Weatherby resumes,
 15 there's something you wanted to say.
 16 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Yes, do you mind? I'm very sorry. This
 17 is an entirely unrelated matter, but I think it is
 18 appropriate for me to say something.
 19 On November 4 last, a witness who gave evidence
 20 before the inquiry died at a young age. That was Police
 21 Constable Jane Bridgewater. She was a British Transport
 22 Police officer and was one of the first on the scene
 23 after the explosion. She did her best to help a number
 24 of those injured in the blast. She gave evidence to me
 25 in relation to her interactions with Elaine Mclver. She

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1 showed considerable courage in her actions in rushing to
 2 the scene without giving any consideration to her own
 3 safety. At the end of her evidence before me, she was
 4 thanked by the family of Elaine Mclver for the efforts
 5 she had made, which I have no doubt meant a great deal
 6 to her.
 7 We would all like, I am sure, to send our sympathies
 8 to her family.
 9 MR GREANEY: Thank you, sir.
 10 MR COOPER: Sir, having heard that, I of course, without
 11 hesitation, wish to send our condolences on behalf of
 12 all the families, no doubt, to the family of that very
 13 brave lady.
 14 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I'm grateful, thank you.
 15 A. The police officer's name?
 16 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Her name was Jane Bridgewater. She was
 17 a British Transport Police officer and she rushed to the
 18 scene immediately after the explosion without giving any
 19 consideration to her own safety. I'm sorry to interrupt
 20 your evidence to do this, but I didn't want to do it at
 21 the end of the day, where people may rush off.
 22 A. No, no. I just wanted to know her name so at least
 23 I can pray for her myself.
 24 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.
 25 MR WEATHERBY: Mr Abdallah, I'm going to try and be as

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1 efficient with time as I can. Mr Greaney has asked you
 2 a number of questions about your conviction. There are
 3 two points that I want to ask you about.
 4 Firstly, it's right that, and no doubt you can
 5 confirm this, but I can give the references if you
 6 don't, but first of all the Court of Appeal described
 7 you as the mentor and organiser for the group, didn't
 8 they? I know you dispute that, but that was what the
 9 Court of Appeal said about you, wasn't it?
 10 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I think we may have had that read out
 11 already.
 12 MR WEATHERBY: I don't think we had that bit.
 13 MR MENON: Just to be clear, this was not an appeal against
 14 conviction. This was an Attorney General's reference
 15 and an appeal against sentence.
 16 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I'm sorry, it was I who described it as
 17 an appeal against conviction, so it was I who was wrong
 18 in that, I'm sorry.
 19 MR MENON: The reason I'm raising it is because Mr Abdallah
 20 was not there in the Court of Appeal.
 21 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Right, okay. It's a matter of record,
 22 so —
 23 MR WEATHERBY: Absolutely, and I'll be corrected if
 24 I'm wrong, but thank you, Mr Menon, for pointing that
 25 out.

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1 Just the second point is that the Court of Appeal
 2 also noted that although the plot had been unsuccessful
 3 in terms of Stephen Gray's attempts to get to Syria to
 4 fight, Raymond Matimba, one of the four men involved,
 5 had gone on to become an IS fighter within Syria.
 6 That's right, isn't it?
 7 A. Yes, I found out when I got arrested in the police
 8 station, when they showed me the first picture, his
 9 picture on Twitter.
 10 Q. Subsequent to your conviction, again as we've already
 11 heard, your brother eventually came back to this country
 12 and faced trial himself, and he was convicted of
 13 membership of Islamic State, wasn't he?
 14 A. Say that again.
 15 Q. He was convicted of membership of Islamic State.
 16 A. Yes.
 17 Q. And in fact, in sentencing him, as I'm sure you'll know,
 18 the trial judge said that to some extent, he acted under
 19 your influence.
 20 A. Well, I don't know -- I don't know if that's what the
 21 judge said, but --
 22 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay, let's stop just for a moment. No
 23 doubt the judge was saying that in the way he was
 24 sentencing Mohammed, which is perfectly all right, but
 25 of course he wouldn't have heard from this witness

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1 during the trial, and perhaps, therefore, any assessment
 2 that he made of the part of this witness should be taken
 3 with a degree of --
 4 MR WEATHERBY: With due weight, indeed. I fully accept that
 5 and I'll move on swiftly.
 6 In terms of the evidence for your conviction,
 7 I'm not going to go into that, but the police seized
 8 your first phone on 1 August of 2017 when they searched
 9 your house, yes? The exact date, please take from me,
 10 it doesn't matter, but they came to your home --
 11 A. End of July, yes.
 12 Q. And in fact, it was 1 August. They seized your phone
 13 and then they came back on 28 November and they arrested
 14 you --
 15 A. Yes.
 16 Q. -- and they seized the second phone; yes?
 17 A. Yes.
 18 Q. So there are two phones, two of your phones involved
 19 here.
 20 A. Yes.
 21 Q. The police used evidence from the first phone primarily
 22 in your prosecution, although they used some of the
 23 material from the second phone in what they call
 24 mindset; yes? Do you recall that?
 25 A. Not 100%.

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1 Q. All right. In fact, on the first phone, some of the
 2 evidence that was relied upon involved your contacts in
 3 Belgium, Syria and Libya. On the second phone, the
 4 police have noted that once the first phone had been
 5 seized, that you only maintained contact with one of
 6 those facilitators, is the words that they used, and
 7 that was a man called Nader Ali, who's based in Libya.
 8 You know who I'm talking about, don't you?
 9 A. Yes, after I got arrested, and before I got arrested
 10 when my phone got seized, the first phone, that was the
 11 time I've sent the money to my brother, and my dad sent
 12 it to him to buy tickets to go back to Libya, him and
 13 Nizar. I haven't heard from him since then, and
 14 I couldn't get in touch with him in any way, and Nader
 15 is my friend also and he's not a facilitator or anything
 16 like that, actually. He's actually a doctor that works
 17 in Turkey.
 18 Q. I see. The officer's note, and it's in the bundle,
 19 I can take you to it if I need to, but I may not need
 20 to --
 21 A. And also when you just mentioned my contact in Belgium
 22 and elsewhere, in Syria, the police actually did accept,
 23 as Stephen Gray told them, "That is my contacts that
 24 I gave to Mr Abdallah", because I don't even know --
 25 neither of them, neither I met them. If you see in the

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1 messages, if you do --
 2 Q. I'll take you to one of the messages, only one of the
 3 messages, or an account of one of the messages from
 4 this, and that's the point of why I'm asking this
 5 question. One of the people that was on the first
 6 phone, who was also a contact on the second phone, the
 7 only one of these people, was called Nader Ali and as
 8 you've told us, he was a medic or a doctor based in
 9 Libya. But it's right --
 10 A. No, he works in Turkey, actually.
 11 Q. Right.
 12 A. A hospital in Turkey. He graduated in Libya.
 13 Q. Okay. On your phone, do you recall his contact was
 14 stored with a picture of him standing in front of an
 15 Islamic State flag, with another man holding a piece of
 16 artillery?
 17 A. There was actually -- let's be fair and just, there was
 18 two pictures. One of them was after the revolution,
 19 before even Islamic State came out, and that flag,
 20 please -- I do actually get frustrated and angry and
 21 actually pee off when people say Islamic State's flag
 22 because that is not an Islamic State flag. As we all
 23 know, that flag's been used by other groups before, but
 24 mainly the biggest group is the Islamic State. But that
 25 flag and the circle, how it's written, it's our

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1 Prophet's seal, peace be upon him, and also the scholars
 2 say that is how it's written -- and that's how -- he had
 3 a ring as well and he was using it as a seal and that's
 4 exactly how it was written, and it says Mohammed
 5 (inaudible) Prophet messenger.
 6 So it's got nothing to do with ISIS, and that
 7 picture was taken before even ISIS, in times of
 8 revolution, and there was another picture of my friend
 9 Nader when he graduated from university in Libya wearing
 10 the graduation uniform, the hat and all that, and he was
 11 holding the same flag.
 12 Q. Okay. All right. I'm not going to go very far with
 13 this, but in light of that answer, in fact, some of the
 14 material used in your trial relating to Nader Ali
 15 related to deceased persons draped in IS flags and
 16 references to weapons. Is that right?
 17 A. If you -- say that again. Repeat that again, please.
 18 Q. In relation to this man Nader Ali that I've put was
 19 recorded in your second phone standing in front of an IS
 20 flag with a man holding a piece of artillery, in fact,
 21 images sent between you and him were used in your trial
 22 as mindset evidence relating to deceased persons draped
 23 in IS flags. Is that right?
 24 A. You mean dead people were ... you mean dead people
 25 wrapped up in --

1 Q. Is it right that those images were used in your trial
 2 from this man Nader Ali?
 3 A. Which pictures exactly? Weapons, yeah, I remember
 4 weapons.
 5 Q. I'm referring to a police report. I can put the police
 6 report up if I have to. Is that right or not, that this
 7 was used as mindset evidence in your trial?
 8 A. I can't remember what was being used as mindset or
 9 anything, but the fact is -- can you not please say this
 10 is an ISIS flag, please, because I do feel -- like
 11 I said, it makes me angry and I feel insulted because
 12 it's a flag that has been used for 1,500 years ago and
 13 it was our Prophet's flag, and if somebody else claims
 14 it and uses it, that doesn't mean it's their flag.
 15 Q. All right. I'll move on and stay with the same person,
 16 and I'm going to move to some of the messages on your
 17 second phone. There's only one message relating to this
 18 man and I'm afraid it's in a police report. We don't
 19 have the actual message because it's not with
 20 Salman Abedi. I think it's probably best if we put this
 21 up. It's tab 18, page 594, please. {INQ042313/594}.
 22 This is a -- the second paragraph down on that page
 23 is all I'm interested in, and this is a text message
 24 conversation. It's actually on 7 November. That comes
 25 from the previous page. But here you are on

1 7 November 2014 on Viber, trying to source a gun in
 2 Libya from this man Nader Ali; is that right?
 3 A. Not from Nader Ali. I was asking him if there was any
 4 Glocks about in Libya, basically, and, basically, it's
 5 just to say that the whole world is different and every
 6 country is different and in Libya, we have weapons.
 7 It's normal and we sell it on Facebook and everything.
 8 One of my cousins in Tripoli was looking for a Glock and
 9 I've asked my friend Nader if he knew anyone that had
 10 a Glock. And finally, I just wanted to ask you: what
 11 the hell has that got to do with the inquiry?
 12 Q. Well:
 13 "By Allah I've been looking for one for a while."
 14 You're trying to source a Glock or a Beretta in
 15 Libya on 7 November 2014. For what purpose would you
 16 want to source a gun in Libya on 7 November of 2014?
 17 A. For what purpose? As I said, as far as I remember the
 18 messages, it was -- I think it's a bit wrongly
 19 translated, but it doesn't make any difference. He says
 20 to me there, there isn't, there's only Beretta around
 21 lately, and he's saying why do I need a weapon?
 22 As I said to you, one of my cousins was looking for
 23 a Glock because his friend had one and, second thing,
 24 I've got -- my family has a lot of weapons in Libya and
 25 we live in tribes and we have even tanks in backyards

1 and everything, so it's -- a handgun is nothing. It's
 2 a big deal, to be honest. So just to make you
 3 understand, you need to understand about other people's
 4 culture and customs, basically. In America, there's
 5 weapons and they live with weapons, so everywhere in the
 6 world is different.
 7 Q. Okay. We can take that down, thank you very much.
 8 Can I move on to another point. You were asked
 9 about a man called Khawlan, who had been martyred.
 10 A. Before?
 11 Q. By Mr Greaney.
 12 A. Yes, Khawlan, yes.
 13 Q. Can you help us where he had actually been killed?
 14 A. He died in Benghazi, entrance of Benghazi, against
 15 Haftar, Haftar's people.
 16 Q. The next message I want to -- series of messages I want
 17 to take you to is at page 615. So you've actually got
 18 the messages here, so this might be a bit easier.
 19 A. I've got the other papers open, 615, yes.
 20 Q. If we could have that up. {INQ042313/615}. On the
 21 right-hand side, 20143. This document shows all of the
 22 messages that the police have downloaded in this 23-day
 23 period between yourself and --
 24 A. Sorry, again, did you say 210?
 25 Q. 20143.

1 A. 20143, yes.
 2 Q. This is a conversation, just if you familiarise yourself
 3 with it here, where Salman Abedi is saying to you that
 4 he's watched the video of Derna.
 5 A. Yes.
 6 Q. "Watched the video
 7 "about
 8 "Al-Derna."
 9 Yes? Derna being a place in Libya?
 10 A. It's in the east of Libya, yes, near Egypt.
 11 Q. And this is 13 November, as we can see. Can you help us
 12 as to why Salman Abedi was referring you to a video
 13 about Derna on 13 November?
 14 A. Derna was one of the cities that — actually, it was
 15 rained by rockets from Haftar's boys and Haftar's
 16 militias who then — as a tribe fought against him. And
 17 I can't recall what video that — it's been years ago,
 18 unless if I see it in front of me.
 19 Q. Again, from open source reporting, if we Google what was
 20 going on in Derna in November 2014 — let me jog your
 21 memory — Derna fell under Islamic State control, didn't
 22 it?
 23 A. Not entirely.
 24 Q. Sorry?
 25 A. Not entirely.

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1 Q. Not entirely?
 2 A. Yes.
 3 Q. Okay. Am I wrong then that Derna was the first province
 4 or town or area of Libya that fell under IS control in
 5 about October of 2014? Isn't that right?
 6 A. No, actually, it was Sirte, the first area.
 7 Q. Okay. Well, if you're right about it, it was certainly
 8 one of the first areas, wasn't it, that fell under
 9 IS control?
 10 A. And it wasn't — Sirte was controlled fully, Derna was
 11 not controlled fully.
 12 Q. In any event, whatever order it was, the interests
 13 between you and Salman Abedi about Derna in those
 14 messages and the video was about IS taking control of
 15 it, wasn't it?
 16 A. Let me see. This is the problem we have. You're
 17 talking as if you are a psychic or what's going on in my
 18 head at the time. The fact is, at the time there was
 19 a fight in Derna between IS and the tribe of Derna and
 20 also a fight against Haftar's — Haftar's army and
 21 everything. And the funny thing; that IS was fighting
 22 with the rebels on one side and fighting them against
 23 the other side. So it was a messed up place, basically.
 24 And you say, "Let me jog your memory". I mean, I don't
 25 want to be rude or anything, but you make it sound like

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1 you were there and watching it with me.
 2 Q. I'm just trying to ask questions to understand what
 3 these messages are about. At line 20164, same
 4 conversation through messages, Salman Abedi is asking
 5 you if you're going to Benghazi and you then confirm —
 6 A. This is?
 7 Q. 20164.
 8 A. Yes. 20162, you mean?
 9 Q. No. 20164.
 10 A. Yes. This is actually a wrong translation. That has
 11 been translated wrong.
 12 Q. Okay.
 13 A. And that's why I mentioned to you 20162. The fact is
 14 this is an Arabic that is a Libyan Bedouin Arabic. Even
 15 other Arabs don't understand it from, like, Middle East
 16 or anything.
 17 Q. Okay. Well, help us if you can.
 18 A. Basically, at that time, when — basically, he said to
 19 me [Arabic spoken]. The people of Misrata or the rebels
 20 of Misrata, they are actually going to Benghazi.
 21 Basically, [Arabic spoken] means they're going —
 22 they're going on, basically. They're — they're going
 23 ahead and —
 24 Q. Yes. But in fact, I think you were going to Benghazi,
 25 weren't you, on 28 November or 29 November?

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1 A. No, I was not going to Benghazi. How can I go to
 2 Benghazi? The whole city is demolished and — just
 3 common sense. I'm in a wheelchair and I use catheters
 4 and everything. There's no — I can't even live in
 5 Tripoli, which is — there's no war and you're telling
 6 me I'm going to go to Benghazi. So —
 7 Q. If I've got that wrong —
 8 A. Yes, you have got it wrong. The fact is you've
 9 translated it wrong, whoever translated this.
 10 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Well, I doubt that you did it, but
 11 anyway, you've explained that the translation is wrong.
 12 A. Yes.
 13 MR WEATHERBY: You give me too much credit. I'm afraid
 14 I haven't translated anything, I have just followed the
 15 translation that the police have provided.
 16 A. Yes, which is wrong, actually. It says that the people
 17 of — the brigade of Misrata is going to Benghazi, and
 18 there was a fight; going to assist other rebels, Tripoli
 19 rebels, (inaudible) rebels, all the western rebels
 20 against the fight.
 21 Q. I see. At the time of your arrest on 28 November, you
 22 were about to leave the country, weren't you?
 23 A. Yes, it was a return ticket and I was going to Libya for
 24 three days or four days with my dad.
 25 Q. Right, okay.

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1 A. Yes, before you say anything else, I remember the
2 judge -- the police said I was escaping. As I said,
3 I can't live there and, second thing, the judge at the
4 time said, "He's not escaping".
5 Q. I'm not going to ask you about that. You may not have
6 been going to Benghazi, but you were in fact going to
7 Libya a couple of weeks after this.
8 But after this part of the conversation, whatever
9 about the translation, Salman Abedi then sent you
10 a Facebook screenshot of a gold dinar --
11 A. Yes.
12 Q. -- with the caption, "For the sake of the return of the
13 righteous caliphate" on it.
14 A. Yes. Can you tell me what page is that, please? Yes,
15 yes, yes.
16 Q. I can --
17 A. Yes, I've found it. I've found it.
18 Q. I can take you to the police report of it.
19 A. Yes.
20 Q. And that shows that the Facebook posting goes on to
21 explain, and I'm quoting:
22 "A gold dinar produced by the Islamic caliphate
23 state real economy, not under control of the west."
24 A. Yes. That was a picture. Again, Salman sent me the
25 picture. I don't have a Facebook and it was a Facebook

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1 picture, and if you see the picture it's called
2 sarcastic -- sarcasm, basically, and I've seen that
3 picture of dinar and I was saying, "Are you serious?"
4 Basically, I'm asking him, and he's laughing his head
5 off, basically. Like, are you serious? These guys are
6 going to bring the old system. They're going to think
7 they bring the old system. I say to him that, actually,
8 dinar is actually mentioned in the Koran.
9 Q. Yes, okay. The point here that I'm trying to ask you
10 about is reference to Derna, which appears to have just
11 fallen under IS control, reference to an Islamic
12 caliphate, Islamic State not under the control of the
13 west currency. This is a conversation which is
14 supportive of the advances of Islamic State in Libya,
15 isn't it?
16 A. Well, that is your assumption and your understanding.
17 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay. He's asking you because you're
18 the only one who knows. He doesn't know. So can you
19 give us -- what do you say about it being supportive of
20 IS?
21 A. The fact is it's an IS picture. They downloaded it
22 themselves. It's not like I made that dinar or anything
23 like that, so -- and they said it's on the Khalifa, it's
24 not the west, and that's all I know. And, actually,
25 Salman was just -- was having a laugh, saying in Arabic

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1 [Arabic spoken], the old system, ha ha. And it's from
2 a sarcasm Facebook page. That's all it was.
3 MR WEATHERBY: I was going to put to you some of the
4 messages to and from and about Elyas Elmehti, but you've
5 confirmed that, in fact, he went out at this time to
6 fight in the east of Libya; is that right?
7 A. Elyas, he was fighting in the middle, which is west of
8 Libya.
9 Q. I don't think I need to take you to the messages, but
10 there were message conversations with him and also with
11 Salman about him at this time, wasn't there?
12 A. Yes.
13 Q. Did you arrange for him to go and fight in Libya at this
14 time?
15 A. There is no arrangement. People -- basically, if you
16 want to fight and you're a Libyan, you just get your gun
17 and go out and fight, join the rebels and fight. That's
18 what was happening in Libya at the time.
19 Q. But something happened with Elyas Elmehti in Libya
20 during this time that you appear to have been
21 responsible for; is that right?
22 A. Which is?
23 Q. Well, you wrote to him from prison, didn't you? Again,
24 you will have seen it because it's in your bundle. It's
25 actually tab 22. Have you seen that? It's your letter

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1 to Elyas Elmehti.
2 A. Yes, I sent it. I've gone through it in the disclosure.
3 I've sent it to my brother-in-law to give it --
4 Q. Yes, you sent it to Abdalraouf Ali.
5 A. When he came back here, when he just came back here,
6 yes.
7 Q. Within that letter --
8 A. I know the question you're going to ask me, yeah.
9 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Well, I don't, so let him ask it,
10 please.
11 MR WEATHERBY: Because you know the question I'm going to
12 ask you, I can hopefully deal with this quickly. In the
13 letter, you say to Elyas Elmehti:
14 "I know that you had a hard time in Libya."
15 I'm taking three parts. This isn't all in one part,
16 so I make it clear I'm taking three parts of the letter
17 out. We can look at if it you want, but in terms of
18 efficiency.
19 A. No --
20 Q. First of all, you say:
21 "I know that you had a hard time in Libya."
22 Then you say:
23 "I feel like I made a problem in your family."
24 And at the end, you say that you're sorry for the
25 shit that happened.

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1 Can you explain that to us?
 2 A. I will explain it, but not in that much detail. He had
 3 a hard time, which is a lot of — which is a big fight,
 4 which is a family problem, because his parents are
 5 divorced, which made a big problem over there in Libya,
 6 and I knew what happened there. He had a big fight with
 7 his father and everything.
 8 Q. Well, why was that your fault?
 9 A. Because there was ... there was another marriage. There
 10 was a marriage between my family and his family and then
 11 it didn't go well and everything, and it's a family
 12 issue, to be honest. I don't want to really go deep
 13 into it.
 14 Q. So nothing, you say, to do with him going out and
 15 fighting in the east of Libya at the time when
 16 Islamic State were making —
 17 A. No, actually, nothing, because if you see the messages
 18 before, actually, there was fire ceased.
 19 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Do you know the group that he was
 20 fighting with?
 21 A. He was fighting with the — I can't remember the name,
 22 but it was all the rebels from the west. They've gone
 23 to the east and — under one sheikh, one imam. I forgot
 24 his name also. I can get it if — I can still get it.
 25 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: What was the group we were talking

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1 about? I'm sorry to keep forgetting names.
 2 MR GREANEY: Ansar al-Sharia.
 3 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Was that the group?
 4 A. Which group?
 5 MR GREANEY: Ansar al-Sharia.
 6 A. That was not the group.
 7 MR GREANEY: AAS-B, sometimes known as.
 8 A. That was — Ansar al-Sharia was in Benghazi.
 9 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay. I just wanted to know whether it
 10 was the group he was fighting with.
 11 A. No, he was fighting — all the rebels from the west,
 12 tribes, had gathered together and they went inside and
 13 they were fighting against Haftar's troops, basically.
 14 MR GREANEY: We did hear yesterday, sir, that AAS-B is
 15 called AAS-B because the B stands for Benghazi.
 16 MR WEATHERBY: I just want to finish this section — I've
 17 got very little more after that — just with a couple
 18 more from the messages about martyrdom. The first one
 19 is at page 616, please. {INQ042313/616}. It's
 20 line 20221.
 21 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: It's a YouTube message.
 22 A. Yeah, the YouTube that last five minutes.
 23 MR WEATHERBY: Yes. I'm going to have to trespass over into
 24 the police report, I'm afraid, on this one because the
 25 whole of it isn't on here, but on 13 November,

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1 Salman Abedi sends you a YouTube nasheed about
 2 martyrdom; yes?
 3 A. Yes.
 4 Q. And it's about somebody who left their family, their
 5 mother, to go and support Allah's religion, yes?
 6 A. Yes. He asked his mother to forgive him and not to weep
 7 as paradise has called him.
 8 Q. And then you then send a similar YouTube nasheed back
 9 about war, don't you?
 10 A. About war?
 11 Q. Yes, and it's a nasheed which has the sounds of gunfire,
 12 helicopters and explosions. And then that's what leads
 13 to the comment:
 14 "This is good ...
 15 "Good for the mother."
 16 A. This is good for the mother?
 17 Q. Yes.
 18 A. [Arabic spoken] listen to the lyrics and concentrate ...
 19 Yes, I mean, a lot of nasheeds are actually poetry first
 20 written and then sang as nasheed and having guns or gun
 21 sound or anything like that doesn't make it, to be
 22 honest, any different or anything like that. Just as we
 23 watch — if you open the radio, open 4Music or Box, you
 24 see in it kids these days singing with — about shooting
 25 and gangster, robbing and this and that. So does that

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1 make them extreme and terrorists as well?
 2 Q. Okay, we'll move on. Page 627, please.
 3 {INQ042313/627}. In fact, actually, I think I'm going
 4 to need again the police report here because it's not as
 5 clear on the message. But on 24 November, Salman Abedi
 6 tells you about a dream that Ismail had about you. Do
 7 you remember him telling you about a dream?
 8 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay, 21827, is it?
 9 MR WEATHERBY: Yes, 21827, but it goes a bit further in the
 10 police report because I think there's a —
 11 A. 24, you say?
 12 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: 21827.
 13 MR WEATHERBY: Yes.
 14 A. Yes, 21827.
 15 Q. Then he sends you something, some images, or he sends
 16 you something else further down at 21838. I think
 17 that's the point.
 18 A. Yes.
 19 Q. Then in the police report, that's explained because the
 20 police officers looked at this, and we need to jump,
 21 I am afraid, to page 607. {INQ042313/607}. It's the
 22 bottom, 24 November. Sorry, I lost my place
 23 momentarily. Can we just highlight the bottom, please?
 24 So 24 November centres around — communication
 25 centres around the fact that Salman informs Abdalraouf

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1 that Ismail had a dream about him and he sends two text
2 messages from Ismail, which are the ones I've just
3 referred to. Those are about you and Salman together on
4 a nice sunny day with you leaning, not in a wheelchair,
5 against a window.

6 And over to the next page, and then you suggest the
7 dream means that Allah is promising recovery and then
8 we're back to the maidens of paradise, and there we have
9 it there.

10 So you're being told here that Ismail's had a dream
11 about you and Salman effectively in paradise. Is that
12 right? Is that how you read that?

13 A. That's what -- that's -- I don't have the Arabic
14 version, to be honest, but that's what it says here in
15 English. I don't think it's a wrong translation.

16 Q. The 24th. And then finally --

17 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Is it being said -- does it go beyond
18 saying that he's promising recovery?

19 MR WEATHERBY: It's the paradise reference and the
20 connection between Salman Abedi and Abdalraouf in
21 paradise through Ismail.

22 A. So his big brother's seen a dream and --

23 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Yes, and you in paradise?

24 A. Was I in paradise?

25 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Yes, that's what's being suggested that

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1 the dream was saying.

2 A. Well, that's what Ismail saw. I don't know. I don't
3 know ...

4 MR WEATHERBY: Then finally -- sorry?

5 A. No, no, I wasn't -- in his dream and he was dreaming,
6 innit?

7 Q. Finally, 27 November, page 631, please.
8 {INQ042313/631}.

9 A. 27?

10 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Hang on a minute, it's coming up.

11 MR WEATHERBY: Page 631, line 22268.

12 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: It's about a quarter of the way down.

13 A. 268, innit.

14 MR WEATHERBY: This is the day before you're arrested, so
15 we are coming to the end of these messages.

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. 22268. Salman Abedi is saying:

18 "By Allah Abdo, this life is not nice

19 "May Allah Make us depart from it in His cause."

20 What did that mean to you?

21 A. Basically, as every Muslim, as I said before, we just
22 ask Allah, we ask our Lord a good death, basically, as
23 every other religion. For example, Christianity, when
24 a person die, you pray for them and you do the prayer.
25 So we ask God for [Arabic spoken] and good -- and depart

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1 from this life .

2 I mean, even looking at Detective Costello's report
3 and his translation as well, he just said it's something
4 normal. There's nothing wrong with this message at all,
5 to be alarmed of or anything like that.

6 Q. Okay, but it's not just -- it's calling for departing
7 from this life in his cause. It's calling for
8 martyrdom, isn't it?

9 A. It's an Arabic translation, Libyan [Arabic spoken], may
10 God make us relax from it in his, basically, path.

11 Q. Line 22271.

12 A. And -- sorry, then you said martyrdom. I mean, it
13 doesn't say anything about martyrdom here.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. If it does, I would tell you. It just basically -- you
16 just chose the message just to -- the reason being that
17 message was written is because if you look at the other
18 messages that we've been talking about and what led to
19 that message.

20 Q. Okay. Final message or final couple of messages.
21 22271. This is you:

22 "listen to the words of the honest and truthful

23 [man] ... [this life] is damned and everything in it is
24 damned except the remembrance of Allah."

25 What were you saying there?

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1 A. This is my Prophet, peace be upon him, hadith. If you
2 know what hadith is, it's the Prophet's say and it's
3 an authentic hadith from authentic scholars of the
4 hadith, like Bukhari Muslim. So that is what the
5 Prophet was teaching us, talking about the desires of
6 the dunya, of the healthy life, basically, and
7 so--and--so, et cetera, basically.

8 Q. Then it goes on. I want to jump to 22278 and Salman:
9 "Hahaha, when you join the team, you'll see that."
10 Again, what does that mean?

11 A. Again, I have a couple of messages, just not a lot, for
12 you, and I told my solicitors when I seen it that
13 they've been translated wrong, basically, and written
14 wrong. In the Arabic, basically, if you translate the
15 word "team", it does say "team", but it doesn't make
16 sense when you say the word "team".

17 Q. You help us make sense of it then. What does --

18 A. Basically, it's meant to be -- rather than the letter
19 [Arabic spoken], it's meant to be the letter [Arabic
20 spoken], which means deep, in a deep, deep end. So,
21 basically, that's a Libyan Bedouin saying, basically
22 slang Libyan.

23 As we are talking about the maidens of heavens and
24 the wives of heavens that God promised us, it's
25 basically saying when you start -- when you go,

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1 basically , when you speak deep about it, first he would
 2 find himself, basically — it says [Arabic spoken]. It
 3 means the two fuse, fuse each other. It 's a metaphoric
 4 word for — you know a man who is — desires the woman
 5 gets a bit heated, basically .
 6 Q. Then again, I'm moving swiftly, 22283:
 7 "By Allah, I' ll kneel down and prostrate when I see
 8 my Beloved Creator. I' ll be crying blood instead of
 9 tears."
 10 A. Yes.
 11 Q. Then 22293, Salman:
 12 "O Allah Grant us a good ending!"
 13 A. Where's that?
 14 Q. 22293.
 15 A. [Arabic spoken]. Again, [Arabic spoken] means "ending".
 16 Oh Allah, basically , oh God, please grant us a good
 17 ending, basically , where you are pleased with us and you
 18 accept us as good, pious people.
 19 Q. I' m not going to take it any further, but let me just
 20 round this up. This is a huge number of messages over
 21 a short period of time, something like 23 days, and
 22 there are repeated references to a good death and
 23 martyrdom, as we've heard. That was your relationship
 24 with Salman Abedi, wasn't it?
 25 A. Not entirely. Well, there's a lot of messages about —

1 talking about ending because of what's going on in our
 2 countries. Every day my friends were dying in Libya and
 3 Syria. So basically , when you hear and make phone calls
 4 and tell you, "This guy died", died, died, send the
 5 picture that he died, died, died, what are you going to
 6 think about death? So you also wish for yourself what
 7 you wish for others and you ask God — basically, you
 8 get emotional. And when people go to funerals, how do
 9 they feel and what do they talk about and what do they
 10 remember? It's the same thing. I am a human being.
 11 And our relationship is not basically as — however
 12 you described it. We are human beings and you do
 13 realise I am a Muslim and that's my belief, basically.
 14 It 's something normal that Muslims believe in.
 15 Q. No one is criticising anyone's religious beliefs here.
 16 But in the context of what you have been doing and the
 17 context of what Salman Abedi went on to do, this was
 18 about radicalisation . It was about discussing some kind
 19 of perverse death, wasn't it?
 20 A. Come on. I don't want to be rude, but you're
 21 a professional man here and you're saying this is about
 22 radicalisation . I mean, you understand I don't want to
 23 be nasty, rude to you.
 24 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I think your answer is no, it's nothing
 25 to do with radicalisation , isn't it?

1 A. Yes.
 2 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Don't let's make it personal.
 3 A. It hurts me because it's something bad and we've — what
 4 he did, the fact is we've been through a lot. I myself
 5 have been through a lot because of it and so has the
 6 families have been through a lot and also our community
 7 and the Libyan community, we feel ashamed about it and
 8 we feel like that everybody is blaming us for it and
 9 everything that — like we had anything to do with it.
 10 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay. No one is blaming the Libyan
 11 community in Manchester for anything. These are perhaps
 12 unusual, on the face of it , messages to find two young
 13 men communicating to each other on a regular basis, so
 14 you're simply being asked to explain them and you're
 15 giving the explanation. All right?
 16 MR WEATHERBY: Yes. I'm going to take that no further.
 17 My final topic, and I will deal with it very quickly
 18 indeed. You will have seen, because it's in your
 19 bundle, the statement of Abdulrahman Forjani.
 20 A. Yes.
 21 Q. And you know Abdulrahman Forjani, presumably?
 22 A. Yes, I know Abdulrahman Forjani.
 23 Q. And he's recounted, and I' ll summarise and you can tell
 24 me if I've summarised it unfairly, that whilst you were
 25 on bail, you and Salman Abedi and Mr Taghdi and another

1 would spend time in his barbershop in Moss Side; is that
 2 right?
 3 A. We didn't spend time as he mentions it. After Friday,
 4 people — we just used to go, give him Salaam and he
 5 used to call us, and he used to call Salman, basically,
 6 "Oh, bring me some food, bring me some drink", et
 7 cetera, et cetera. And like the Libyans, lads, they
 8 would go into shop as he opened. Culturally that's what
 9 we do, to help him out with his business and everything.
 10 And I've seen his statement as well and —
 11 Q. Okay. Let's just put what I want to ask you about and
 12 then you can say what your answer is. He says that you
 13 and Salman Abedi and Mr Taghdi went in there, you and
 14 Salman certainly every Friday for a month in the summer
 15 of 2016, and that you and Salman Abedi and, on occasion,
 16 Ahmed Taghdi would talk about Libya and Syria and the
 17 Middle East. And just to be completely accurate, he
 18 says that although there was no open support for
 19 Islamic State, you in particular were expressing views
 20 supportive of Islamic State; is that correct?
 21 A. So to be honest, I speak four(?) languages and that
 22 doesn't make any sense to me, a person who speaks
 23 English. There is no talk of Islamic State, but — he
 24 supports Islamic State. Can you please translate that
 25 to me?

1 Q. Then he said it got to a stage where he threw all of you
2 out --
3 A. That's a lie.
4 Q. -- because of the views that you were expressing in
5 front of his customers. Is that right?
6 A. I have read -- I have read his statement, first thing,
7 just to tell you. The fact is his father hates me
8 because he hates my father. They don't get along
9 because he's a Gaddafi rat, basically, and he was always
10 a Gaddafi supporter. Also, he never liked Salman's
11 father as well, even though they are relatives, and
12 that's how it is.
13 Most of the Libyan people in the community, the men
14 and uncles, they never like -- they don't like his
15 father. His father was a very actually -- after Friday,
16 I've seen his father in the shop, went in, and his
17 father was talking to us about politics and Libya,
18 religion, what's meant to be happening, what's going on
19 blah, blah, blah, chatting to us.
20 And in terms of Abdulrahman, Abdulrahman is
21 a junkie, first thing at all, and he's a liar as well
22 saying that he threw us out because we were talking
23 about politics. The fact is I don't talk to
24 Abdulrahman. I don't even chill with him. I don't even
25 know him. I was -- I was close to his big brother

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1 before in high school, but him, Abdulrahman, he was
2 nothing to me. He's a little kid to me, basically, and
3 basically, him and his father, they're both lying and
4 out of the 200/300 Libyans who got arrested in
5 Manchester and questioned, they've been all questioned
6 about me and they said the truth, but for some reason,
7 his father doesn't get along with my father so he's got
8 hate towards me anyway.
9 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: In short terms, he's not telling the
10 truth and the reason is because of disputes between your
11 family?
12 A. Yes.
13 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay, thank you.
14 MR WEATHERBY: Thank you very much. That's all the
15 questions I have.
16 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you very much, Mr Weatherby.
17 MR GREANEY: I know Mr Cooper has some questions, he thinks
18 about 10 minutes.
19 MR COOPER: Maybe less.
20 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.
21 Questions from MR COOPER
22 MR COOPER: "Allah willing, may both of them burn. Allah
23 willing, may both of them burn." Not a nice thing to
24 say, is it?
25 A. Can you please --

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1 Q. I will, I promise you. I'm asking you first, "Allah
2 willing, may both of them burn". I'll give you the
3 reference in a minute, but generally, that's not a nice
4 thing to say, is it?
5 A. Yeah, I know which message you're referring to.
6 Q. Good. It's not a nice thing to say, is it?
7 A. Is it a nice thing to say, not a nice thing to say?
8 It's got nothing to do with the, basically, inquiry or
9 anything like that.
10 Q. You're not the chair. That gentleman's the chair. It's
11 not a nice thing to say, is it?
12 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I don't know what you're talking about
13 either. I have no idea.
14 A. Talking about boxing match ...
15 MR COOPER: We're talking about people you were talking to
16 with Salman Abedi about who you referred to as kuffars,
17 from Liverpool. Shall we look at it?
18 A. Yes. If you look again (overspeaking) --
19 MR COOPER: We'll take time (overspeaking) --
20 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: (Overspeaking).
21 A. Salman sent me the message about boxing.
22 MR COOPER: Let's look at it. It's the tone I'm asking you
23 about.
24 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Mr Cooper, it's getting quite late.
25 Just let's keep the temperature down. We've done quite

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1 well so far. Please.
2 MR COOPER: Of course. Well, pressure there.
3 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Well, no, no.
4 MR COOPER: No, I understand. It's gone well. Pressure to
5 make sure it goes well, and I will. I'll be brief.
6 Page 625, please.
7 A. Can you give me the date?
8 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Just have a look at it first, please.
9 Let's have it up.
10 MR COOPER: You'll have the lot, don't worry.
11 {INQ042313/625}. I want you to look at lines 21560 to
12 start, please.
13 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Very near the bottom, okay?
14 MR COOPER: I just want to analyse this conversation.
15 Salman says to you, effectively:
16 "There is boxing today
17 "Two 'kuffar' (infidel) donkeys are going to fight
18 "from Liverpool."
19 You say.
20 "Really!
21 "Allah Willing, may both of them burn."
22 And that's 22 November 2014.
23 A. Yes.
24 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay. Now just explain what you mean by
25 that, what you were talking about.

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1 A. I was — I was, I think, with Ayoub at the time and one
2 of my friends, playing PlayStation and watching film.
3 MR COOPER: I can't hear you, I'm afraid.
4 A. I was, at the time, with my friend in my bedroom and
5 I think we were playing PS2, Far Cry, or watching
6 a film. Mostly I think we're playing Far Cry.
7 Q. You were watching a film, yes?
8 A. Film or playing Far Cry, PlayStation.
9 Q. Yes?
10 A. So he sent me this message and it says [Arabic spoken],
11 "Two kuffar (infidel) donkeys are going to fight from
12 Liverpool". I'm not bothered, said "Inshallah, let them
13 burn".
14 Q. Let them burn?
15 A. Let them burn, I don't care. It's a — yes.
16 Q. It's a Muslim expression, is it?
17 A. Basically, it's — in Libyan, in Arabic, we say —
18 Q. It's —
19 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Really, don't talk across each other.
20 More speed, but —
21 MR COOPER: You were saying it's an Arabic expression to
22 say, "Allah willing, may both of them burn"; is that what
23 you —
24 A. Yes. It's like inshallah [Arabic spoken], "Who cares?
25 Let them both burn." It's like in English terms you

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1 say, "Let them go to hell".
2 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: What do you understand by "two kuffar
3 donkeys are going to fight"? What did you understand by
4 "kuffar donkeys"; that they were non—Muslims, but they
5 were what?
6 A. That's what it says here, "two donkeys".
7 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I know that's what it says there. How
8 did you understand it? What did you understand it to
9 mean?
10 A. To be honest, it's a long time, innit, and I was playing
11 PlayStation at the time and he's sending me messages
12 about boxing. I'm not very interested. I said, "Let
13 them go to hell". And you're talking about tone and
14 everything. I mean, Mr Cooper, I mean, I don't think
15 you're an angel yourself. We all swear.
16 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I'm asking the questions at the moment.
17 Do you mind looking in my direction?
18 A. Yes, I'll look in the other direction and I'll say it.
19 We're all human beings. We all swear. None of us are
20 perfect. So if we're talking about tone or not tone —
21 just because we're in the court, let's not act like
22 we're angels or anything like that. I'm just trying to
23 be honest here. We all get — we all swear and
24 everything. Just because — a message like that, it
25 doesn't mean anything.

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1 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: The use of the word "kuffar" by Salman,
2 is, as I understand it, a rude expression for
3 non—believers, which is what we heard about for the "us
4 and them". So there are the true believers and then
5 there are the kuffar, and it's not a phrase used by
6 ordinary middle of the road Muslims, is it?
7 A. To be honest, Salman sent me the message. I don't know
8 what he means. It's been a long time, actually. And
9 you're talking about us and them, there isn't.
10 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay. I was just trying to — as it's
11 been explained to us, I think, by Dr Wilkinson.
12 A. No, actually, the fact is in Islamic religion, whoever
13 is not a Muslim is actually called a kuffar in the Koran
14 itself.
15 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: In the Koran?
16 A. In the Koran itself, and we can bring you all the verses
17 and everything about it in the Koran and the hadiths,
18 whatever you want, basically. That's the Islamic
19 religion. And Dr Wilkinson will not — I don't think
20 Dr Wilkinson would disagree with the words in the book
21 itself.
22 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: We'll ask him. Is there anything
23 against — do Muslims hold anything against boxers?
24 A. No, I was a professional Muay Thai boxer myself. It's
25 got nothing to do with boxing. He sent me the message

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1 and I wasn't probably in the mood. I'm not bothered.
2 I was just playing PlayStation, a game or something. So
3 I just turned round, "Let them go to hell", or something
4 like that. That's what it means, basically. Basically,
5 metaphorically, I don't give a shit about them.
6 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.
7 MR COOPER: On the subject of burning, page 612, please.
8 {INQ042313/612}. Can we focus, please, sir, on lines
9 19497, please. 19497. I don't know whether it can be
10 enhanced.
11 Here is Salman talking to you. He said:
12 "I have college."
13 And you say:
14 "Yeah, right."
15 And then you say:
16 "Allah willing, it burns."
17 Why were you wanting the college to burn?
18 A. It doesn't — 1947?
19 Q. Yes, let's take our time.
20 A. One nine, what?
21 Q. I'll start again. 19497 to 19531. It looks like Salman
22 is saying:
23 "I have college."
24 And you say:
25 "Yeah, right. Allah willing, it burns."

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1 So Allah willing, the boxers burn. Now it's Allah
 2 willing, the college burns. Can you help us with that?
 3 A. Yes. In Arabic you can't translate exactly 100% in
 4 English, but metaphorically what it means, basically --
 5 the word "inshallah" means hope, like hope, hopefully
 6 this and that. The reason being, basically, he said
 7 he's got college, I thought we were going to chill the
 8 second day and I was pissed off that I was not going to
 9 see him or he was --
 10 Q. Sorry, I can't hear a word you're saying.
 11 A. I said, as far as I remember, basically, he was meant to
 12 come and see me or something like that and he said, "No,
 13 I've got college", and I said, "Shit, hopefully the
 14 college burns", and then he laughs his head off and
 15 goes, "No, no, no, not the college". That's all it was.
 16 Q. Can I suggest you weren't saying hopefully it burns, you
 17 were invoking the name of a respected name? "Allah
 18 willing, it burns."
 19 A. Yes. I said to you, you can't translate the Arabic into
 20 English 100%. It's a metaphoric language.
 21 Q. Right.
 22 A. Inshallah, basically, it means, like, hopefully. Just
 23 like an expression, basically, of anger.
 24 Q. Why couldn't you have said, "Well, why can't you take
 25 some time off and come and see me?", not, "Allah

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1 willing, the college burns"?
 2 A. Well, this is how Libyans talk, innit.
 3 Q. Right. All right.
 4 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Are you leaving that?
 5 MR COOPER: I am, sir.
 6 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay. Just look at what you say at
 7 19511 when you're again talking about the college and it
 8 burning. You say:
 9 "As it is a filthy place."
 10 Why did you think the college was a filthy place or
 11 didn't you?
 12 A. One nine, what?
 13 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay. It's 19511.
 14 (Pause).
 15 Have you got it? It's a bit further down from what
 16 we were looking at before, part of the same
 17 conversation. 19511. If you look on the screen, it's
 18 actually being shown with the cursor.
 19 A. On the 9th?
 20 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: It's part of the same conversation.
 21 Because he's asked you why it should be burned and you
 22 say:
 23 "Ha ha ha, as it is a filthy place."
 24 Maybe you're all joking, I don't know.
 25 A. Yeah, yeah, we're just being sarcastic. He's laughing

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1 his head off and then he goes, "No, no, bro, what do you
 2 mean, you want me to burn over there?" I say, "No, no,
 3 no". He's talking about the college and he goes "ha ha
 4 ha".
 5 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I just wondered why you called it
 6 a filthy place, that's all.
 7 A. It sounds in Arabic, basically, like a bit funnier, to
 8 be honest.
 9 MR COOPER: Sir, I've actually got no further questions.
 10 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you very much.
 11 MR GREANEY: I'm going to see if anything has changed. No,
 12 Mr Menon has no questions. Nor do I.
 13 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you very much for coming to give
 14 your account and your evidence. It's been a very long
 15 day for you, so thank you very much.
 16 Mr Menon, if I could just say this. This has been
 17 a very long journey, and this is not to criticise
 18 anyone, but I hope in the end it has been satisfactory
 19 to the witness and everybody else for him to come here
 20 and give his account and the way it's happened.
 21 MR MENON: Thank you.
 22 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Just let's all have confidence in the
 23 system. Thank you very much.
 24 Monday morning?
 25 MR GREANEY: Sir, yes, for the core participants, Monday

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1 morning.
 2 (4.57 pm)
 3 (The inquiry adjourned until 9.30 am
 4 on Monday, 29 November 2021)

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3 MR ABDALRAOUF ABDALLAH (sworn)1
4 Questions from MR GREANEY1
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