

TRANSCRIPT OF "FILE ON 4" – "THE SYRIAN CONNECTION"

CURRENT AFFAIRS GROUP

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PRODUCER: Paul Grant
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ACTUALITY OF GUNFIRE

MAN: It's going to be flying over, duck down. It's too high, it's too high, it's going over the mountain.

CUFFE: These men have left their homes in the UK for life on the front line of Syria's civil war.

MAN: We're here fighting for one cause, to bring back an Islamic state, to bring back the sharia of Allah.... and for the Muslims to live in peace.

CUFFE: The Home Secretary and MI5 have warned about the terrorist threat from British residents now fighting in Syria, but you rarely hear from the men themselves. In Tonight's File on 4 we get an insight into who they are and why they're taking part in another's country's war. It's not so much what these men are doing now that causes alarm, but what they might do in the future.

NASSAR: When they come back, this country has to face the music, because those people would be absolutely highly charged and they are capable of doing anything.

CUFFE: In the Syrian Connection, we set out to discover what type of people go and fight in Syria. How did they get there and what are their long term goals? But the most important question is whether they'll go on to commit an attack on British soil.

SIGNATURE TUNE

ACTUALITY OF BRITISH FIGHTERS ON HILLTOP, VOICE OVER RADIO

MAN: We're currently on guard duty on the top of a mountain and there's been slight firing between us, and they've got snipers in closer positions that have fired at us. My name's Abu Bader, I'm here to protect the Muslims in Atma. Any movement we see, we'll just get rid of, inshallah.

CUFFE: On a starlit night in northern Syria, a group of British fighters, armed with AK47s and a machine gun, keep watch over a village occupied by the enemy.

MAN: We've got a couple of night scopes on our Kalashes, we can see quite well at close range, inshallah, and at the moment see ahead of us, they have their electricity. Electricity comes from time to time. The electricity is on right now so we can see the city quite well. These are a couple of snipers aiming at us, yeah?

CUFFE: This recording was made for File on 4 by a Muslim journalist in Syria. The men wouldn't talk to us directly by phone or Skype because of concerns about their security and we've no independent means of verifying who they are, but we know they're in an area close to the Turkish border.

MAN: That's a car. We don't know whose car that is though. These brothers can't keep coming down here. They think this is like the cool spot or something. That light is slowly moving forward to the left.

MAN 2: I think that truck that came forward was indicating to the snipers that we're heading on that last tip.

MAN: Right now it's eleven o'clock at night. A lot of people in the village behind us are asleep and the fact that we're here, risking our lives, we could die to protect these people, we just consider it as a noble duty and hopefully we will obtain paradise from doing so.

MAN 2: We're here fighting for one cause – to bring back an Islamic state. Allah made it easy for me to come here and serve my religion. We're protecting our own people, the Muslims, and there's other motives as well. Apart from the religious side, there's a humanitarian side too, everyone who has a conscience or a bit of humanity in them wouldn't allow people to be slaughtered and sit behind.

CUFFE: The war that these men are fighting in has now claimed 100,000 lives and displaced millions more. The opposition's Free Syrian Army has been joined in the conflict by a multiplicity of other groups, many funded from abroad and some - like Jabhat al Nusra and ISIS - affiliated to Al-Qaeda. Shiraz Maher of the Centre for the Study of Radicalisation at King's College, London, says it's become a magnet for young Muslims across the world eager to take part in Jihad – a holy war, or struggle to defend Islam.

MAHER: Syria seems to dominate the global Jihadi mind, it is the premier location in the world to go and fight Jihad today. And one of the interesting things we've seen is that other Jihadi groups, so Al-Qaeda and the Islamic Maghreb in Somalia, to a lesser extent Yemen, have issued a communiqué saying, 'Listen, don't forget about us, we also need foreign fighters, don't all go to Syria,' so it's showing that they are somewhat worried about the number of people going to Syria. But at the moment, I think if you are a young foreign fighter and you're looking for a conflict, Syria is very much at the pinnacle.

CUFFE: MI5 says there could be as many as two hundred UK fighters in Syria – but who are they?

ACTUALITY ON STREET

CUFFE: We wanted to track down some of the individuals behind the statistics. So we're starting by asking people in the Syrian community, who must be watching the suffering of their countrymen with growing despair. The residential streets of west London, round Acton, are home to many of the Syrians living in Britain.

AL ABDEH: In this road alone about five Syrian families and in this area probably no less than about fifteen.

CUFFE: I've come here with Malek Al Abdeh, a Syrian commentator. Who is the neighbour across here?

AL ABDEH: Well, the neighbour is the father in law of President Bashar al-Assad. He's lived here for many many years.

CUFFE: Which house?

AL ABDEH: The brown one over there.

CUFFE: Are the Syrians here of one mind? What do they think about having Bashar al-Assad's father in law in the neighbourhood?

AL ABDEH: Well the majority of them now have come out publicly and openly against the regime. They took a very dim view of Dr Fawaz initially when he agreed to marry his daughter off to the Shah, but particularly after the revolution began and the bloody clampdown on protestors. That really got them going and that drove some of them to actually protest outside his house, and in one instance to actually attack his front garden and his front door.

CUFFE: And some Syrians in Britain fear that the divisions are now too deep to heal.

ACTUALITY OF NADAR NASSAR IN CHURCH

NASSAR: The Lord be with you.

CONGREGATION: And also with you.

NASSAR: Lift up your hearts.

CONGREGATION: We lift them up unto the Lord.

NASSAR: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

CONGREGATION: It is right to give thanks and praise.

CUFFE: Nadar Nassar is a Syrian Christian, now an Anglican vicar who's lived in Britain for over fifteen years.

NASSAR: The polarisation happened after the conflict and is happening, has been severe. I experience and I know people who have lost friends, dear friends, because of the conflict, because of a difference of opinion, political or religious or both. I know even families broke because of the conflict, between man and wife. Now all the Syrians, we are all passing through horrible time, sad time, and the polarisation is tearing the community apart.

CUFFE: Many Syrians have responded by organising charity events and sending humanitarian aid or even going out to work in hospitals and refugee camps. Some, we're told, would like to fight, but worry that their families here will be subject to reprisals. And there are others, according to the Reverend Nassar, who are attracted by an extreme Islamist cause.

NASSAR: I can't speak a lot about it because what I know is confidential, but I know that some families are devastated that their sons left to Syria to fight in the name of Islam. Not to liberate Syria as a Syrian but to fight for the sake of the religion. And absolute minimum, absolute minimum, very very few families would bless that and support that. But I know of families, they were really devastated to know that their children went and they fight alongside Jabhat al Nusra or Al-Qaeda or these groups.

CUFFE: And do you think that some people might go with the best of intentions, with not wanting to get involved in any Jihad at all, but just to help their fellow Syrians, and might then be radicalised when they get to Syria?

NASSAR: All scenarios are open. There are people who go there for humanitarian reasons and they feel themselves hooked there with some agendas, and there are people who go there and stick to their mission, to help in refugee camps or inside Syria, in humanitarian aspects, but I don't think anywhere in the world has seen what is now happening in Syria - the horror, the terror, the violence, the pain of the people is beyond imagination.

CUFFE: The appeal of fighting in Syria goes wider than the Syrian community. Jihadist groups have refined the art of propaganda, making full use of the internet and social media sites to win recruits and funds from across the world.

ACTUALITY OF PROMOTIONAL VIDEO

MALIK: This is one of their promotional videos from Raqa, the city that's controlled by the opposition. As you can see, quite slick, quite slick graphics.

CUFFE: Malik al-Abdeh has been monitoring extremist sites. They're open to everyone and almost impossible to police. As fast as one is shut down, another pops up.
Looks like a Hollywood movie.

MALIK: Looks like a Hollywood movie, yes. And again, these are sort of motifs - horses, knights. Again, it's reminiscent of early Islamic history, so the implication is their fighters are like the early fighters of the Muslim conquests 1,400 years ago. Jihad is extremely romantic for anyone who decides to do. Quite often especially for men in their late teens or early twenties, it's the first time that they get the chance to get away from home. They can do things which perhaps back home might be viewed unfavourably, like they can grow their hair long, they can grow their beards long, they can even get married for first time whereas normally that might be difficult because of their financial situation. But when they go to perform Jihad, the groups that they fight with actually help them to actually get married, to settle down and develop a new life within those kind of societies. It is extremely romantic, sometimes quite literally so.

CUFFE: But what effect do you think watching this kind of video would have on a young British Muslim?

MALIK: Any British Muslim who believes in Jihad, who believes that Jihad is one of pillars of Islam - and there are many people who believe this - he would look upon this video as being extremely inspirational and perhaps he would feel the need that one day he will need to go and do this, in the same way as many Muslims believe that they should go and perform the Haj, the pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in their life.

CUFFE: These messages are particularly persuasive for young British nationals from poorer backgrounds who feel disempowered.

ACTUALITY OF STREET NOISE

CUFFE: There's one community that knows this only too well. Sudanese refugees in Britain, many of whom, ironically, fled from an extremist Islamic state, have already seen young men leaving to fight with al-Shabaab in Somalia. Now, according to Salah al Bander, who runs the Sudanese Diaspora and Islamism Project, about twenty and maybe more, have gone to fight in Syria.

AL BANDER: Most of the families, especially within our Sudanese community, they tend to refute the fact that their kids joined a Jihadist group, because first of all they don't want really to face any reprisals here or at the same time they want to protect their interests in this country and in Sudan itself. So they would pretend that they went back to Sudan or they went to join their siblings somewhere in the Middle East or that kind of stuff. But from our community intelligence network, we manage to interview so many families.

CUFFE: And have you met any in person who've gone to fight in Syria?

AL BANDER: I met some of them – in fact I met some of them before they left. I wasn't really in any contact with them since they left this country, but I know their families, I know their backgrounds. Most of them is between 22 to 30 years old, so they are very young, they are very aggressive in terms of their ideals. Not one of them coming from any privileged background. Not one of them.

CUFFE: We've spoken to the father of one of these men who confirms that he has gone to Syria, but doesn't want to talk about it. Salah al Bandar says that the extremists recruit these young men through prayer rooms attached to mosques, he calls them incubators, and then arrange their travel to Syria.

AL BANDER: These kids are living within a deprived background, they are living in communities ridden by unemployment. They find these small isolated mosques, these small offshoot mosques where they can feel a sense of belongness (sic) and, from my experience, it's most unlikely for these kids just to go to the back streets of Istanbul, Ankara or Jordan or whatever, knocking on doors, asking about the headquarters or the address of the Jihad or the Nusra or Liwa al-Islam. No. These kids, they don't have access even to buy a ticket. There is a kind of railroad between British cities or western cities and linking points in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, to bring these individuals inside Syria. This is a network of people who is initiating the contacts here and there is definitely people who is in the receiving end there, coordinating all these efforts. Some of them there in these refugees camps or displaced people camps, they are very specifically to meet volunteers who is coming from not only western Europe but from the Middle East itself.

CUFFE: With Turkey only a budget flight away, it's cheaper for Jihadists to get there and across to Syria to fight than it was to get to Afghanistan or Somalia. Tam Hussein, who researches Islamic affairs, has done the journey several times and talked to would-be fighters.

HUSSEIN: Most people go through Turkey, because it's quite porous. Either you go through Bab al-Hawa, which is the official one and you get a stamp or you'll go through the smugglers' route, which has been running for decades. Some of the foreign brigades, the more inexperienced brigades as well will actually kind of do a round-up of foreigners, let's say in certain refugee camps, but at the same time I have seen Europeans, you could clearly tell that they're going to cross the border and they stick out miles, miles out, and they cross the border, they probably have a contact there that they will join or they have a friend who will get them across. It's not hard to join a brigade. And some of these guys, the furthest they've been is Spain, to Benidorm maybe, right, and they've come into a foreign country and there are accounts of some of these kids being killed by the regime as a result, and I look at them as kids. I've spoken to some members who say some of these are useless

HUSSEIN cont: because they don't know how to take orders, they sleep too much, they eat too much and they have a rebellious streak that maybe that comes from living in London maybe.

ACTUALITY OF TRAFFIC NOISE

CUFFE: Since the conflict began, small charities have mushroomed across the UK. They've sent fleets of ambulances and medical equipment to Syria and raised millions of pounds in donations. In the absence of any international rescue plan they have been a life-line for many Syrians who would otherwise feel completely abandoned. But Shiraz Maher of the Centre for the Study of Radicalisation, believes that not all of them are what they seem.

MAHER: In some cases, these charity groups have proved to be fronts for people wanting to go and fight in Syria. And there have been at least two or three cases where the police have had to stop people posing as aid workers or who are leading ostensible aid missions to Syria when they've had actionable intelligence that in fact this is not going to be an aid mission. Again, some of the people we've spoken to, aid workers tell us that they can't always control what's happening either, that when they get to the Syrian border, they have to transfer from Turkish trucks to Syrian trucks because the Turkish trucks aren't allowed in, and in the transfer process it's not just bags of wheat that are being moved from one truck to the other is what one British aid worker told me.

CUFFE: Do you think some of these charities are deliberately set up in order to take fighters and funds into Syria?

MAHER: Yes, categorically. In some cases, there is very hard evidence that these are simply front organisations, almost like a shell company designed to facilitate the transfer of men and money into the Syrian conflict.

CUFFE: In December last year a group of men heading for the Middle East were stopped at the port of Dover by Kent Police, their vehicles were searched and £40,000 in cash was seized because of suspicions that it was intended for illegal purposes. The case is still under investigation. In August, the Charities Commission confirmed that they are investigating a London-based charity. They say:

READER IN STUDIO: Our inquiry will examine issues relating to the end use of charitable funds, and seek to determine whether there has been any mismanagement or misconduct on behalf of the charity trustees, taking appropriate remedial action if necessary.

CUFFE: Syrian commentator, Malik Al-Abdeh, has been closely involved with some of the charities operating in the conflict zone. He says the majority are perfectly above board, but thinks that some do provide extremists with a pipeline for funds.

MALIK: There are some charities which are run by people who believe in Jihad, they are Jihadists in many ways, and while it's difficult to prove, you can safely assume that some of that cash might make its way to groups that the west would designate as terrorist groups or Jihadist groups, groups that are hostile to the west.

CUFFE: Is this just a matter of taking wads of cash out or is there another way of getting funds to the Islamic groups?

MALIK: There's two ways. One is carrying bundles of cash, although that's quite difficult now, given the restrictions on movement of cash. Another way is to convert that cash into goods. That certainly to a large extent applies to vehicles, quite often money raised in the UK would be converted to buy those kind of cars and to take them to Turkey and then from there they would be taken into Syria and those goods might then be sold and then converted to cash in Syria.

ACTUALITY OF SINGING

CUFFE: Back on the Syrian mountain, the group of British fighters prepare to defend their hilltop position. We've been told there are about twenty of them.

MAN: Now, the brothers cleaned the Dushka for us, because it was a bit rusty yesterday, we're just trying to connect it together because we've heard that there's probably about a hundred cars heading our way.

MAN 2: It's a 12.7 mm automatic weapon and it comes on a stand and inshallah is very powerful.

MAN: We learnt just the theory about how to lock and load it, how to aim it in training. Nobody's allowed to go onto the battlefield without doing at least two weeks or a month or a month and a half training. I've done a month and a half training now, thanks to God I've been allocated on this team to use this weapon.

MAN 2: This is part of the Jihad. Inshallah, we're prepared for them.

CUFFE: These men won't say where in the UK they're from, but their accents suggest they are British born. Although they won't speak to us directly, they've agreed to answer some of the questions we've put to them about how they come to be fighting in Syria.

MAN: There's no recruitment process to come here, first of all. It's an individual decision that I took upon myself. I found it a duty upon myself as a Muslim to come here and help. Second, it's an emotional decision that I took myself, it's not something where someone says, 'I'm going to offer you x amount of money,' or some stupid brainwashing, as some people may classify it. Upon my arrival, I found some likeminded brothers who'd come across in the same manner and so forth, and their goals are the same, so they were the ones that I was attracted towards the most and I tend to join them so we can fight together. As for the global Jihad, I couldn't tell you if I'm going to be alive tomorrow, let alone future plans, but my main goal right now is to push back this oppressive regime and help bring back the sharia of Allah's... in the land of Shah, in the land of Syria.

MAN 2: My parents don't know where I am. I think they would probably understand. It's more of the case I don't want my mother to worry too much about me. I'm pretty 100% sure that she wouldn't ask me to come back, but it's the issue that she would be worrying a bit too much which would affect me also, because I obviously don't want my mum being upset. The reason I am here for, I think they would understand because we have had conversations about what's going on here before and they have understood why it's the right thing to do to help the people that are being oppressed.

MAN 3: Hamdullah, I've had a very good upbringing. I grew up in an area that was a fairly nice area, it wasn't crime riddled or anything like that. I come from a decent family, a close-knit family, very well educated. Everyone within my family's a

ACTUALITY ON HILLTOP

MAN: They're on that mountain there, just in front of us.
That's class, that's class range, bro.

MAN 2: Okay, they're going to start shooting

MAN: That's where they are.

MAN 3: Bring the binoculars! Yo!

CUFFE: At five in the morning, the British fighters see action at last. There's movement down in the valley where forces allied to the Assad regime have control.

ACTUALITY OF GUNFIRE

MAN: Can you see that moving? Can you see that moving?

MAN 2: It's on safety. You shot a bit too low, man. Rushing things. When you be patient, you explain the situation to all of us, we all going to help each other. When you just rush, it's a one man army.

ACTUALITY OF GUNFIRE

MAN 2: It's going to be flying over. Duck down. It's too high, it's too high, it's going over the mountain.

MAN 3: Too high.

CUFFE: What we don't know is which brigade these men belong to, but the question that's preoccupying British security officials is whether they'll be content to call it a day when the conflict's over, or whether they'll continue what they call their holy war back home. And that's one of the questions we put to them.

MAN: As for British mujahedin, I genuinely don't understand the concern. I mean, if these people have left the country to help Muslims abroad, what's their concern? What's their fear? It's slightly surreal to go back to the UK and start a Jihad there when the origin in the country, it's a Christian country, so why would we need to go there and start a Jihad?

MAN 2: For me personally, I was born and raised there, that's my home, so in a sense I could see why they'd be worried, but if I wanted to do something in the UK, I wouldn't have come here. Like I say, if I did want to do something in the UK, I think I would have done it by now.

MAN: You cannot paint everyone with the same brush. There are people that have just left to come and help the Muslims here. If they wanted to do anything, they would have done it in that place, so you do have to be able to distinguish the difference.

CUFFE: Whatever they may say, security officials will be concerned that the longer they stay in Syria, the more contact they'll have with terrorist groups who'll exploit feelings of resentment or anger at the west. At least one of these fighters already feels alienated from the society he grew up in.

MAN: There is a lot you miss and there is a lot that you don't miss, you know, being a Muslim in the west. The west, they don't want to listen, they don't understand when we want to speak. They just see it as crazy, radical people and everyone has to just shout and have a big banner and want to blow up a bus or something. Being a Muslim and having certain beliefs, the harassment you get for having a beard and having difficulty worshipping your religion in the west. That is also something that I don't miss at all. A lot of problems, police wanting to raid houses, it's not nice, you feel like a second class citizen in some respects. I feel I'm free here, nobody can tell me what to do unless it's through my belief to God.

CUFFE: Home Secretary, Teresa May, has described Syria as a training ground for a new generation of British terrorists, and the head of MI5 says thousands of Islamist extremists see the British public as a legitimate target for attacks. In their annual

CUFFE cont: report to Parliament, the Intelligence and Security Committee described the involvement of UK residents in Syria as posing a significant threat for years to come. But their chairman, Sir Malcom Rifkind, acknowledges that fighters may have different reasons for going, and not everyone who returns will be radicalised .

RIFKIND: Some who might take part in these terrorist acts in Syria may be so sickened by what they themselves have been involved in or what they have seen that they resolve never to do that again. There will be others who have gone purely because of strong feelings about Syria and may not feel the same extreme views in regard to other countries, including the United Kingdom, but we must assume that from amongst the total, there will be some who do return, either to continue what they were doing or trying to do in Britain before they ever went to Syria, or seeking to use the experience they have obtained in Syria for further acts of terrorism in this country - that must be a possibility. Let's not be under any illusions. A very small number of people can create a massive national or international problem. They are a terrible threat.

CUFFE: Whatever fighters say about their aims in Syria, Shiraz Maher thinks they'll find it difficult not to be swept up by the global Jihadist agenda.

MAHER: I think it's inconceivable to imagine the Jihadists limiting themselves to Syria alone. For now they're focused on removing Assad and fighting his regime, but ultimately these are guys who harbour dreams of going to Jerusalem. And this is the first time, if you think about it, Al-Qaeda has been fighting in a country that borders Israel. We talked to a lot of fighters on the ground via Skype. They make reference to the fact that whenever the Islamic Empire traditionally conquered Jerusalem, the army always came from Damascus. So there's a sense of historical resonance there, where they're telling us in a sort of journalistic euphoric fashion and I'd say quite idealistic too that once they remove Assad, they will be marching towards Jerusalem.

CUFFE: And if the Syrian conflict has long term impact, it won't just be confined to the Middle East.

MAHER: These guys will be coming back and even if they are not themselves committed to engaging in military action back in the UK, for example, they will be part of a network, there will be a club of foreign Syrian fighters. So there's a sense of the

MAHER cont: Al- Qaeda or the Jihadist network repopulating itself, which have been very effective in dismantle post 9/11. Now it's been re-energised, it's been repopulated and it's reviving itself and that is quite a remarkable and staggering thing to think ten years on from 9/11 that that's where we're at.

CUFFE: As a Syrian Christian, Nader Nassar has good reason to fear what Jihadist groups are doing in his home country, where Christian villages have been attacked and summary executions carried out. Afraid that British fighters will be brutalised by their experience of war, he shudders at the prospect of their return.

NASSAR: Those fighters from Britain who are fighting now in Syria, how do we deal with them when they are back? Some people we would know that they were fighting in Syria and some people we wouldn't even know they were fighting in Syria. When they come back, this country has to face the music, because those people would be absolutely highly charged and they are capable of doing anything.

CUFFE: So what can British security officials do to stop fighters from going to Syria in the first place and then to monitor them on their return? Former intelligence officer, Richard Barrett, emphasises the importance of getting good information from the Muslim community. He says that being over-concerned about terrorism is just as much a danger as not taking it seriously enough.

BARRETT: Generally speaking, we always in counter-terrorism have to remember the values that we're fighting to protect rather than succumb to taking measures which actually are against the sort of fundamental rights of individuals. I think that the British Government has made great strides in showing that it's not about Islam, it's not about a belief, it's about violence, about criminality. What the security services have done is form alliances with communities, because of course no community wants to see any member come back and start killing people in British streets. I mean, you just don't get that. So that security service ability now to work with communities on a basis of trust, I think, improves the possibility of them finding out if people coming back are a danger to society.

CUFFE: We have evidence that British security services are actively monitoring people going in and out of Syria. In the last few months, fifteen people in two aid convoys have been stopped and interrogated under Schedule 7 of the Terrorism Act.

CUFFE: Amandla Thomas Johnson is spokesman for Cageprisoners, an organisation which helps people who claim to be wrongly accused of terrorism. He says the fact that all fifteen were Muslims is bound to sour community relations.

JOHNSON: Some members have reported they've been barred from entering Turkey. This apparently has been based on intelligence from the UK. There's a sense that UK authorities are actively preventing people from going out there and this is going to be disastrous for the humanitarian situation in Syria. We find it quite strange as people going out there for humanitarian work and the fighters themselves are doing something which is almost toe to toe with British foreign policy.

CUFFE: But if you say that they're being stopped on the basis of intelligence, then presumably the security services know something that we don't about their background?

JOHNSON: But I think in these cases we need to take into consideration due process. If someone is suspected of something, we have processes in the law that should come into place and allow these people to see the evidence and to speak out against it themselves. Some of the techniques being used are actually alienating, are actually causing more trouble, can lead to people not collaborating or wanting to collaborate with security services. If someone's innocent and they've been harassed by security services, it's not going to make them compliant, to take part in what they want them to do.

CUFFE: Our request for an interview with the Home Office was turned down, but Sir Malcolm Rifkind of the Intelligence and Security Committee, points out that people can only be stopped from travelling if there's reason to suspect them of terrorist activity.

RIFKIND: I don't pretend it's easy for the authorities because we're a free country. What our law says is people are perfectly free to travel, but if you are going to another country in order to join or assist a terrorist organisation, then you are in breach of British law, you can be prosecuted for that.

CUFFE: And what would an official say to somebody who was going to fight in Syria because if stopped, their answer would be, 'I'm going to fight for the very same opposition that you, the British Government, support.'

RIFKIND: If the person who's proposing to travel to Syria is someone who is already known to the intelligence agencies or to the police, either as an actual terrorist or as a suspected terrorist or as someone who has sympathy with terrorism, then obviously the questions would be more explicit as to the purpose of that person's travel. If, on the other hand, it's someone against whom there is no reason to believe they have any terrorist links or background or sympathy, then you start with the presumption they're a law abiding citizen.

CUFFE: For British security officials, trying to stem the flow of Jihadists from Britain and monitoring them on their return poses a major challenge. In order to ensure the good will of the Muslim community, whom they rely on for help in their war against terror, they have to get the balance right between vigilance and over-zealous surveillance techniques targeted at people of a particular ethnic background or religion. As far as Sir Malcolm Rifkind's concerned, those who go out to Syria will be judged by the company they keep.

RIFKIND: It's one thing to be involved in armed battle against other armed people, because you believe in a particular cause and you're trying to fight and win a particular war, but when you have the deliberate killing of innocent men, women and children as in effect an act of terror simply to sow terror amongst the community to advance your cause, then that is terrorism.

CUFFE: So does that mean that any British national who goes to fight for Jabhat al-Nusra or a group like Isis with similar aims is really a terrorist?

RIFKIND: You can sometimes have difficulties with the precise definitions of terrorism, but as the old phrase goes, if a person looks like a terrorist and behaves like a terrorist and kills people like terrorists do, then he's a terrorist.

SIGNATURE TUNE