

Blind Imam was 'strangled with ornamental rope by raving man' who claimed he had killed the anti-Christ

A blind Muslim cleric was strangled by a man who later told police he had killed the 'antichrist' and that it was Judgment Day, a court heard today.

Hamza Boutouil, 25, attacked Maymoun Zarzour with an ornamental rope at Muslim Welfare House in Finsbury Park, north London on September 2 last year, jurors at the Old Bailey were told.

The imam, known as Sheikh Maymoun, was blind from a young age from injuries he suffered in his native Lebanon.



The Old Bailey heard how blind imam Maymoun Zarzour was strangled to death

After the killing, as witnesses were giving descriptions to the police, Boutouil returned to the centre and was 'raving', the court heard.

Prosecutor Jonathan Turner QC told the court: 'You will hear from them what state he was in when they first came into contact. I will make no apology for the use of the word, they will say that he was raving. 'Among the things he was saying, which bystanders translated from Arabic so the police could understand, was that he had killed the antichrist, and that by that he meant the imam, and that this was Judgment Day.'

It is accepted that Boutouil killed Sheikh Maymoun and his defence claim that he was criminally insane at the time and should receive hospital treatment.

The prosecution argues that he should be found guilty of manslaughter on the grounds of diminished responsibility.

In the hours before the killing, between 2am and 4am, Boutouil was seen behaving strangely on CCTV.

The court heard that he confronted a man and then two girls in the street before picking up a pigeon and walking off with it.



The fatal attack happened in the office of the Muslim Welfare House in Finsbury Park shortly after the morning service

Later he went to the welfare centre and was heard shouting 'Allahu akhbar' (God is great) repeatedly and was behaving strangely during morning prayers.

At around 8.40am he spent around an hour alone with the imam and killed him, the jury heard.

The primary cause of death was strangulation. Sheikh Maymoun was also covered in bruises consistent with a struggle.

Mr Turner said: 'Whatever else had happened in that room, the imam had not sold his life cheaply. He had fought back, despite his blindness.'

Mr Zazour's blood was found on Boutouil's shoes, while the killer's DNA was on the cord, the court heard. Algerian Boutouil, who was in the country illegally since July, was living in a squat near Wood Green, north London at the time of the killing.

The trial continues.