

'Islam is a religion of mercy and compassion': Muslims condemn child sex grooming in hard-hitting sermon being delivered to 500 mosques

- Faith faces a 'major challenge' after paedophile ring and death of Lee Rigby
- Sermon highlights Islam's commitment to 'shun evil'
- Distributed by Together Against Grooming, an anti-sex abuse organisation

By Emily Davies

Mosque congregations around Britain were given a 'call to action' yesterday to tackle grooming by individuals in the Muslim community - in the week that seven men from a paedophile gang in Oxford were jailed. A sermon, entitled Tackling Street Grooming in the UK, was made in Friday prayers in around 500 mosques. It highlighted the responsibilities of Muslims to shun 'all forms of indecent and immoral behaviour' as taught by the Koran.



Brothers Akhtar Dogar (left) and Anjum Dogar (right) were each given a life sentence with a minimum of 17 years at the Old Bailey





Mohammed Karrar (left), 38, was given life with a minimum of 20 years for the 'dreadful offences' he committed against the girls. His brother Bassam Karrar (right), 34, was also handed a life sentence with a minimum of 15 years



Kamar Jamil (left), 27, was jailed for life with a minimum of 12 years while Assad Hussain (right), 32 was sentenced to seven years in prison



Zeeshan Ahmed, 28, was jailed for seven years for two counts of sexual activity with a child

The move comes after five members of a seven-man sadistic paedophile ring found guilty of grooming vulnerable underage girls were given life sentences at the Old Bailey. Two other defendants were both jailed for seven years. The midday prayer, called Jummah Salah, said: 'Today I will speak to you about the subject of 'Sexual Grooming' that has been in the news a lot recently with many cases involving mainly men of Pakistani or South Asian background in Derby, Rochdale, Telford, Oxford and West Yorkshire who have been convicted of this wicked and evil crime.

The sermon states that with 'so many individuals from a Muslim background involved in such crimes, we have a responsibility to condemn this.

'We wholeheartedly condemn the disgraceful actions of those involved in these cases and welcome the convictions in the cases that have been through the courts.'

It was said publicity of cases of sexual grooming involving Pakistani and South Asian men, and coverage of the forthcoming trial of Michael Adebolajo and Michael Adebowale on charges of killing Lee Rigby would present the Muslim community with a 'major challenge'.

The sermon, which was part of the Together Against Grooming campaign, was unusual because it is often seen as a taboo to discuss such topics inside mosques.



Hate: The Woolwich murder has been exploited by the anti-Islamic English Defence League led by Tommy Robinson (pictured)



The murder of Drummer Lee Rigby by Islamic extremists will create a 'major challenge' for the Muslim community in Britain

But the Muslim groups which support the campaign hope that discussing the topic openly may prevent further similar instances from happening.

The sermon said: 'We need to continue to speak against and oppose this crime and make sure that there is a high level of awareness of this issue among our community.'

'We need to tackle some of the root causes, which are quite often linked to criminality in some sections of our community and quite often connected to drugs.'

Together Against Grooming spokesman Ansar Ali said the campaign was born out a feeling of 'natural responsibility' to condemn and tackle sexual grooming.

He said: 'The Koran and traditions of our Prophet exhort us to act against evil and injustice, and create just societies. This is the start of what will be a nationwide project in which we seek to work with others to eradicate this practice from all communities.'

'The June 28 Together Against Grooming campaign is unprecedented - we have brought together mosques and imams from all over the UK, irrespective of differences to collectively deliver a hard-hitting sermon on a single issue. 'We are united in our stand against sexual grooming and, as Muslims, we are leading the effort to rid society of this crime.'