

At least 50 dead in London bombings

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The final death toll from the four bombs that exploded in London on July 7 will reach least 50. There are more bodies yet to be recovered from the London Underground, but at least 13 deaths have been confirmed as a result of the explosion on a London bus.

The blasts were timed to coincide with the morning rush hour, when the maximum number of civilians—workers, students, tourists—would be using public transportation. This underscores the criminal and reactionary character of the attacks, whoever its perpetrators were. To date, police and official investigators say they have not made a determination as to the authors of the atrocity.

The explosions on the three tube lines and the bus left 700 injured, with 100 held overnight in hospital and 22 in serious or critical condition. Hospitals had to implement emergency measures, calling in extra staff and cancelling non-urgent operations. Many patients were taken into surgery after losing limbs or suffering burns and multiple injuries.

There has been considerable speculation over whether the bus bomb was the work of a suicide bomber. However, Metropolitan Police Commissioner Sir Ian Blair said there was “absolutely nothing to suggest this was a suicide bomb.”

Andrew Hayman of the Metropolitan anti-terrorist unit said only that each device contained less than 10 pounds of high explosive and could be carried in a rucksack. These had been placed on the floor of tube trains and the seat or the floor of the bus’s top deck.

The events of the past day have underscored how terrorism, far from hindering imperialism, plays into its hands—sowing fear and political disorientation among the masses and giving the ruling elite a pretext for intensifying its policies of militarism and repression.

Leading government figures and much of the media in Britain have seized on the bombings to ramp up demands for further repressive measures and attacks on

civil liberties, such as the planned introduction of ID cards.

The G8 summit of major industrial nations at Gleneagles in Scotland was transformed under the leadership of US President Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair into an occasion to justify their war against Iraq and the so-called “war on terror.” Bush and Blair seized on the tragedy to further their political agendas. On Thursday morning, within a few hours of the bomb blasts, Bush went before the cameras and declared that “The war on terror goes on.”

Several newspapers made calls for basic freedoms to be sacrificed in the name of fighting terrorism. The *Daily Mail* stated, “Make no mistake, Britain will almost certainly have to sacrifice some of our ancient legal rights if we wish to protect our citizens.”

The *Sun*, published by right-wing media mogul and Blair supporter Rupert Murdoch, went further. Its editorial declared, “Britain is crawling with suspected terrorists and those who give them succour. The Government must act without delay, round up this enemy in our midst and lock them in internment camps.

“Our safety must not play second fiddle to their supposed ‘rights.’

“Nor must those who preach foul sermons on our streets be allowed to do so any longer.

“Free speech is precious, but these wicked men mock our tolerance.”

Accompanying these calls to grant the state further repressive powers have been extraordinary efforts to deny any connection between the bombings and Britain’s support for the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. This is despite the fact that the bombings have been almost universally attributed to Islamic terrorists, despite the lack to date of any clear evidence pointing to the identity of the authors of the atrocity.

Both politicians and the media continue to cite the claim of responsibility by the “Secret Organisation

Group of Al Qaeda of Jihad Organisation in Europe.” This claim, by an unknown group, was posted on just one Islamic website, and its credibility has been disputed even by some officials. The posting declared that the attacks were directed against the “government of Britain in response to the massacres Britain committed in Iraq and Afghanistan.”

Yet Home Secretary Charles Clarke, after stating that the claim of responsibility on the Internet was a “serious one,” said in the next breath, “There is no evidence [it] had anything to do with the Iraq war.... That’s not about Iraq or any other particular foreign policy issue, it’s about a fundamentalist attack on the way we live our lives.”

The *Times*, another publication of Murdoch’s, also insisted, “There may be a few people inclined to make a link between the deaths in London and the intervention in Iraq. This is utterly flawed thinking.... London was attacked because extremists want to ignite a ‘holy war’ between themselves and democratic society.”

The one prominent political figure who made a connection between the bombings and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan was George Galloway. Currently a member of Parliament for the Respect party, Galloway was previously expelled from the Labour Party for opposing the Iraq war. In Parliament, he said Londoners had “paid the price” for the US-led coalition’s actions in Afghanistan, Iraq and Guantanamo, which had inflamed hatred against the West in the Muslim world.

Galloway’s statement provoked a furious response. Armed Forces Minister Adam Ingram accused him of “dipping his poisonous tongue in a pool of blood.”

The *Sun*’s editorial described Galloway as a “disgusting slimeball.”

Christopher Hitchens, writing in the *Daily Mirror*, said Galloway was acting “as a megaphone for psychotic killers.”

The reason for such vitriol—and why a connection between terrorist bombs and Iraq and Afghanistan is denied—is clear. The government is keen to utilise the criminal actions of the terrorists to press forward its efforts to secure a share of Middle East oil reserves in alliance with Washington. It also believes that it can capitalise on the confusion created by the bombings to intimidate and silence its opponents.



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