

Leader of "Revolution Muslim" Sentenced to 138 Months for Using Internet to Solicit Murder, Encourage Violent Extremism

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ALEXANDRIA, Va. – Jesse Curtis Morton, aka Younus Abdullah Muhammed, 33, of New York City, was sentenced today to 138 months in prison, followed by three years of supervised release, for using his position as a leader of “Revolution Muslim Organization’s internet sites to conspire to solicit murder, make threatening communications and use the internet to place others in fear.

Neil H. MacBride, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia; James W. McJunkin, Assistant Director in Charge of the FBI’s Washington Field Office; and Raymond W. Kelly, New York City Police Commissioner, made the announcement after sentencing by United States District Judge Liam O’Grady.

“Jesse Morton sought to inspire Muslims to engage in terrorism by providing doctrinal justification for violence against civilians in the name of Islam. The string of recent cases with ties to Mr. Morton demonstrates that he was very successful,” said U.S. Attorney MacBride. “His crimes not only put people’s lives forever in danger, but they also chilled free expression out of fear of retaliation by violent terrorists.”

"Mr. Morton utilized the internet to incite fear and terror by encouraging violence and radicalization, and he will now pay for those crimes with today's sentence," said Assistant Director in Charge McJunkin. "Together with our partner law enforcement agencies, and with the assistance of the community, the FBI will continue to pursue those who support violent extremism and promote the radicalization of others, whether online or in person."

Morton pled guilty on Feb. 9, 2012. According to court records, in 2007, Morton founded Revolution Muslim, an organization that operated internet platforms and websites supportive of violent extremism. Morton and his associates used the organization’s websites to encourage Muslims to engage in violence against those they believed to be enemies of Islam and to support Osama bin Laden, Anwar Al-Awlaki, al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and others espousing violence. They posted messages in support of the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001, the November 2009 killings at Ft. Hood and attacks and future threats against Jewish organizations, among others.

Through his online forums, Morton conspired with Zachary Chesser, of Fairfax County, Va., and others to solicit the murder of an artist tied to the “Everybody Draw Mohammed Day” movement in May 2010, including posting online a magazine that included the artist in a hit list for violent extremists to take out and a message from Anwar Al-Awlaki that explicitly called for the artist’s assassination. In justifying these actions, Morton posted online a speech of his asserting that “Islam’s position is that those that insult the Prophet may be killed” and exhorting his listeners to fight the “disbelievers near you.”

In addition, Morton admitted that he aided Chesser in taking repeated steps in April 2010 to encourage violent extremists to attack the writers of South Park for an episode that featured Muhammad in a bear suit, including highlighting their residence and urging online readers to “pay them a visit.” Among the steps they took were posting on multiple occasions speeches by Anwar Al-Awlaki, which explained the Islamic justification for killing those who insult or defame Muhammad. Morton worked with Chesser to draft a message for the website regarding the South Park threats, including a quote from Osama bin Laden that “If there is no check in the freedom of your words, then let your hearts be open to the freedom of our actions.” Morton and Chesser posted the final version of this statement on various extremist online forums, and Chesser told Morton that he expected the statement would “scare the kuffar.” Kuffar is an Arabic term, referring to an unbeliever, or disbeliever, in Islam.

Chesser was arrested on July 21, 2010, charged with providing material support to Al-Shabaab and later also pled guilty to communicating threats and soliciting violent extremists to desensitize law enforcement. Four days after Chesser’s arrest, Morton fled to Morocco, where he resided until his arrest on U.S. charges on May 26, 2011.

This investigation is being conducted by the FBI's Washington Field Office and the New York Police Department's Intelligence Division. Assistant United States Attorney Gordon D. Kromberg of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Virginia and Trial Attorney John T. Gibbs of the Counterterrorism Section in the National Security Division are prosecuting the case on behalf of the United States.

A copy of this press release may be found on the website of the United States Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Virginia at <http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/vae>. Related court documents and information may be found on the website of the District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia at <http://www.vaed.uscourts.gov> or on <http://pacer.uspci.uscourts.gov>

<http://www.justice.gov/usao/vae/news/2012/06/20120622mortonnr.html>