

Free speech debate a complex issue

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Hizb ut-Tahrir spokesman Uthman Badar.

PRIME Minister Tony Abbott threatens to ban the extremist Hizb ut-Tahrir, and his critics already protest he's trampling on free speech. True, but is that the end of the argument?

Abbott yesterday called these Sydney-based Islamists "thoroughly objectionable" and he hoped soon to pass laws banning groups promoting terrorism: "Then I suppose we have to have another look at Hizb ut-Tahrir to see whether they fall under the definition."

The evidence already suggests it might come close. Last November, a Hizb ut-Tahrir leader, Wassim Doureih, warned 600 people at the group's annual conference they faced "a war on Islam — a war that is being waged in this country as it is in the rest of the world".

In that alleged war, Hizb ut-Tahrir seems to me to side with head-hacking terrorists.

It will tomorrow hold a lecture in Lakemba called The war to end a blessed revolution, claiming the US and its "puppets and allies" (like Australia) are trying to "quash the noble Syrian revolution" by bombing the Islamic State and Muslims should "respond as America attacks the most potent uprising in the Muslim world in the last century".

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Hizb ut-Tahrir is already making pre-emptive excuses for any reprisals here. Last month Doureih told a rally: "Even if a thousand bombs went off in this country all it will prove is that Muslims are angry." Before that, Hizb ut-Tahrir warned: "Abbott has been leading the way in demonising Islam and Muslims ... If he (goes into Iraq) again, his Government and those who support such a move alone will be responsible for the repercussions that ensue."

That isn't all that alarms me.

Hizb ut-Tahrir spokesman Uthman Badar even agreed to give a lecture titled Honour killings are morally justified.

Meanwhile, Hizb ut-Tahrir's Australian leader, Sheik Ismail Al-Wahwah, told a Sydney rally in July that Jews were "people with hearts of stone" and "wherever the Jews thrive, corruption abounds".

He warned: "The Jihad will continue until the words of Allah come true: 'Judgment Day will not come until the Muslims fight the Jews ...'

"Tomorrow, you (Jews) shall see what will become of you: an eye for an eye, blood for blood and destruction for destruction."

Banning Hizb ut-Tahrir would hurt free speech.

It would almost certainly make misfits martyrs. The precedent would be terrible.

But it's not that simple. What they are preaching sounds lethal.