



WHO ARE THE EDL?

The English Defence League is a far-right social movement which was formed in 2009. The movement was formed as a response to a group of protesters who demonstrated at a homecoming parade by the British Army in Luton, Bedfordshire. The protesters (mainly made up of members of the, now banned, Islamist extremist group, Al Muhajiroun) felt that the celebration of the soldiers' return was wrong and they held offensive banners condemning the actions of the British Army. This prompted the formation of The United People of Luton, which later became the EDL.

The English Defence League was formed around a network of existing football casual and hooligan groups and, at the time of writing, is led by Stephen Yaxley-Lennon, who uses the pseudonym, Tommy Robinson.

The EDL organises street protests across England which sometimes culminate in drunkenness and violence. Many arrests have been made at these demonstrations, both of EDL members and of counter-demonstrators who come to protest against the EDL.

The EDL claims only to oppose Militant Islam (which is an extreme interpretation of Islamic ideology, practised by a very small number of the world's Muslims) but, much of the rhetoric is directed against all Muslims and portrays Islam as a barbaric religion. Their social networking profile and the chants which can be heard on their demonstrations clearly illustrate this, as does their violent opposition to the building of Mosques and other buildings centred on the teachings of Islam.

The EDL is characterised by in-fighting and splits within their leadership. Some of the more influential members have joined forces with far-right political parties and have also formed links with other far-right groups such as the Infidels and the Combined Ex-Forces (CXF). There is no membership list for the EDL and some people hide their faces with masks when on the EDL demonstrations.