

# 'The fatwa was in place and the threat of extremism

Salman Rushdie should have been better protected when making public appearances, according to experts.

In 1988 Iran's religious leader called for the author's murder after accusing his novel, *The Satanic Verses*, of being blasphemous.

Rushdie spent years in hiding under police

protection in the UK before moving to the US, re-entering society and making regular appearances at literary festivals, including several appearances at the Edinburgh International Book Festival.

After the attack on stage in New York State, Dr Paul Stott, head of

security and extremism at the Policy Exchange thinktank, said: "The security was clearly not good because the attack went on for about 20 seconds and the attacker was eventually led off by what looks like one police officer and a member of the public.

"His personal security

would be Salman Rushdie's own decision but there are choices for the venue and indeed for the country where he's been living.

"Obviously, over time his own sense of danger or threat has mellowed but the nature of contemporary Islamist people did not mean it had gone away. There

are a lot of angry young people out there and the fact that the threat had come from a nation state initially makes it all the more powerful.

"The threat of extremism hasn't changed or gone away - it's just we've got more used to it."

Stott, who has written extensively

# hasn't changed. Security was not good enough'

about Jihadism, said: "At various times over the years the Iranians have given out different messages about Rushdie and eventually took a position that they weren't actively trying to kill Rushdie.

"That probably played some part in Rushdie reducing his personal security. On other

occasions, including quite recently, the line has been that once a fatwa is issued it can't be rescinded. The current Iranian president tweeted recently that the fatwa is still in place.

"There is also a financial element to the fatwa. It's several million pounds and this individual

potentially qualifies for that money."

Professor Ali Ansari, of St Andrews University, said: "The fatwa issued against Salman Rushdie by the supreme leader of Iran, Ayatollah Khomeini, was the subject of some contention at the time.

"It was delivered verbally rather than

written and people questioned whether Khomeini had considered all the relevant material...

"Be that as it may, the ruling was understood as a fatwa, while an Iranian 'charity' offered a bounty in order to encourage the 'faithful'. It remains a salient example of acute

shortsightedness in policy making."

Chautauqua County Sheriff's Office deputy, Eugene J Staniszewski, said the venue had asked for police support ahead of the event. "They requested a law enforcement presence be there," he said. "And, thankfully, we were."