

Wave of firebomb attacks on Muslim targets in New York City

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A wave of firebomb attacks directed against Muslims took place late on New Year's Day in the New York City borough of Queens. The incidents, all taking place within less than an hour, started at about 8 PM and were centered in the Jamaica section of eastern Queens.

The most prominent target of the homemade firebombs was the Imam Al-Khoei Foundation, which houses a well-known Shiite mosque and also has branches in other cities. No one was injured in this or the other attacks, but the dangers posed were highlighted by the fact that about 80 worshippers were inside the mosque at the time.

The mosque was the third target to be hit. The first was a small grocery store and the other two were homes. The second of the attacks, on a private home not far away, caused a fire that took more than 60 firefighters working nearly three quarters of an hour to bring it under control.

This serious outburst of anti-Muslim hate comes just a few months after revelations from the Associated Press of a wide-ranging spying operation conducted by the New York City Police Department for the past ten years against the city's Muslim population, including immigrants and native-born citizens (See "New York City police, CIA in massive spying operation against Muslims".)

The firebomb attacks also took place only two days after the annual interfaith breakfast hosted by New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg. These events, at which the city's chief executive postures as an advocate of religious tolerance, have been taking place for decades. Unsurprisingly, they never address the social problems that give rise to and are used to intensify religious or racial tensions. This year, Bloomberg's breakfast was particularly hypocritical, given the recent revelations of spying and provocations

against the city's Muslim population in particular.

The latest revelations led 14 of the Muslim representatives invited to this year's event with the Mayor, held at the New York Public Library on December 30, to write Bloomberg a letter announcing that they were boycotting the breakfast to protest the obvious demonization of Muslims under the direction of the Mayor and his Police Commissioner, Raymond Kelly.

The writers, including a professor at the Fordham University Law School and the president of the New York chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, wrote, according to a report in the *New York Times*, that "we are deeply disturbed that to date we have only heard your words of strong support for these troubling policies and violations of our rights."

CAIR, a Muslim-American civil liberties and advocacy group, issued a statement condemning the firebombings. It also pointed out that that mosques or mosque construction sites in Massachusetts, Oregon, Ohio, New York, Iowa, Maine, Georgia, Missouri, Louisiana, Tennessee, Texas, California and Michigan have been targeted by arson, vandalism or threats in the past year.

The record of the Police Department in this area is clear. Under the direction of its civilian intelligence chief David Cohen, who held high positions within the CIA before he retired from that agency, it has carried out massive surveillance operations against communities that have no involvement in anything remotely resembling terror threats.

Local and federal authorities have carried out fraudulent sting operations, using paid informants, to ensnare confused and impoverished young men with provocative rhetoric and promises of money. As in the case of the "Newburgh 4," the end result is conspiracy

charges to carry out crimes that never take place and that would never arise in the first place if not for the provocations of the police informants themselves (See “FBI informant in ‘Newburgh 4’ terror frameup caught in perjury” .)

The demonization of Muslims is considered necessary “collateral damage” in the campaign to orchestrate continued public support for the phony “war on terror” launched in the wake of the September 11 attacks of ten years ago. It is aimed at maintaining fear and support for right-wing police state measures such as the Patriot Act, with its unconstitutional provisions, many of which were extended in legislation signed by President Barack Obama last May. While the Police Department policies encourage attacks on Muslims, its attention is focused not on these crimes but on its own manufactured efforts to whip up fear of “terror.”



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