

Fourth terror attack in UK since March targets Muslims

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20 June 2017

One man was killed, and 10 injured after a van mowed down Muslim worshippers leaving prayers at 12.20 a.m. Monday in Finsbury Park, North London.

The driver, 47-year-old Darren Osborne, who was detained at the scene, reportedly yelled, “I’m going to kill all Muslims—I did my bit.”

Osborne, a father of four, had driven the rented van from his home in Cardiff, South Wales to the Muslim Welfare House, near Finsbury Park Mosque, where he waited until late night prayers had finished. On Ramadan holiday the mosque was especially busy and onlookers said many more could have been killed or injured.

Osborne drove onto the pavement, ploughing into a crowd that had gathered to help an elderly man who had become ill due to the heat. The older man died at the scene, eight others were taken to hospital, and two were treated on the street.

Onlookers described injured bodies lying across the street, as the van dragged people beneath it. When Osborne jumped from the cab, shouting his anti-Muslim statements, he was pinned to the ground by several men, while the local imam Mohammed Mahmoud shouted, “Don’t hit him—you do not touch him—hand him into the police.”

Osborne tried to goad the worshippers, saying repeatedly, “Kill me, Kill me.” When he was handed over to police, he taunted the crowd, “I’d do it again, I’d do it again,” as he smiled, waved and blew kisses.

The attack is the fourth terror attack in Britain since March—one in Manchester and three in London—that have claimed 36 lives so far.

On March 22, Khalid Masood drove a car into pedestrians on Westminster Bridge and fatally stabbed a police officer at the entrance to Parliament before being shot dead. Four others died and 49 were injured.

On May 22, suicide attacker Salman Abedi detonated his bomb at an Ariana Grande concert at the Manchester Arena, northwest England, killing 22 people and injuring 120.

On June 3, eight people were killed and at least 48 injured after a van was driven at high speed into people on London Bridge. The three occupants—Khuram Shazad Butt, Rachid

Redouane, and Youssef Zaghba—then ran to neighbouring Borough Market, where they stabbed people indiscriminately before being shot dead by armed police.

Appearing at Finsbury Park yesterday, Prime Minister Theresa May pompously expressed her sorrow over “evil borne of hatred.” She has come under sustained fire for her indifference to the horrific inferno at Grenfell Tower, west London last Wednesday, where the current death toll is 79 people and rising. Worshippers at the mosque had reportedly been giving prayers to the victims only shortly before they were attacked.

May referenced London Bridge and the “unimaginable tragedy of Grenfell Tower” in her statement following her chairing of a Cobra emergency meeting. She spoke in platitudes about the “unbreakable resolve” and community spirit in this “extraordinary city of extraordinary people.”

This was buttressed with her repeating the need to stamp out “extremist ideology” by denying it “safe spaces.” May has made clear this includes joining the United States in taking military action in Syria and strengthening counterterrorism legislation. She used the Finsbury Park assault to repeat her threat to gain powers for greater censorship of the internet by forcing internet companies to give up individuals’ private messages, such as through WhatsApp, and to force them to censor material or face heavy fines.

Nonetheless, May’s reference to not tolerating “extremism of any kind, including Islamophobia” was welcomed by the *Guardian* as a “distinct and important change in rhetoric” away from her previous “one-eyed” approach, targeting Islamic extremism.

Such claims disarm workers and youth as to the strengthening of the state apparatus and its implications. It also conceals that this latest attack—clearly motivated by anti-Muslim hostility—has been encouraged by the statements of numerous political leaders, including May, and by the media.

The prime minister seized on the attacks in Manchester and on London Bridge to try and strengthen her position

under conditions of a snap general election that she had called two years ahead of schedule. Claiming that the country was at war with the ideology of Islamic extremism, she said it was “time to say enough is enough.”

“There is far too much tolerance” of Islamic extremism in Britain, she claimed.

In one sense this is true—at least as far as the intelligence and security services are concerned! Virtually every single person that has been involved in a terror attack in Britain since 7/7/2005 was known to the state. Many had been reported repeatedly as potential terror threats and were under surveillance. Italian intelligence services had informed their British counterparts, for example, that the London Bridge attacker, Youssef Zaghba, had attempted to travel to Syria and was considered a terror risk.

Butt had appeared on a Channel 4 TV documentary, “The Jihadis Next Door,” in which he threatened police and posed with an ISIS flag. Manchester bomber Abedi came from a well-known family of Libyan Islamic supporters of Al Qaeda, who were part of the western-backed overthrow of the Gaddafi regime in 2011.

The authorities allowed all these individuals to move around freely because they were part of a network of operatives protected by the British state, which has been used in the UK and US-backed regime-change operations in the Middle East.

The right-wing media has seized on the latest attack to up its anti-Muslim campaign. Writing in the *Sun*, Douglas Murray called for an end to “large-scale Islamic immigration,” the “permanent closure” of mosques “caught hosting anti-British views,” “imprisonment of everyone known to have connections with extreme organisations” and the deportation of dual nationals “caught associating with designated groups.”

Finsbury Park Mosque was previously associated with the Islamic fundamentalist preacher, Abu Hamza, who was imam from 1997 until 2003 and was convicted in the US in 2015 for terror-related offences.

In fascistic tone, the *Daily Mail* editorialised, “We need action—now. There is a war being fought on our streets and it’s time to deploy all the weapons at our disposal.” Its columnist Katie Hopkins went further. After the Manchester bombing she tweeted, “Western men. These are your wives. Your daughters. Your sons. Stand up. Rise up. Demand action. Do not carry on as normal. Cowed.” She also called for a “final solution” in another anti-Muslim tirade.

After London Bridge she claimed the capital was the victim of its “multiculturalism.” Speaking of London as if it was an enemy city, facilitating and colluding with Muslim extremists through its “endless tolerance to those who harm us,” she wrote that it was now, “The patriots of the rest of

England versus the liberals in this city.”

Osborne’s precise affiliations are not yet known, but in travelling from Cardiff to London to mount an attack on Muslims leaving prayer he was taking such incitements to their logical, murderous conclusion.

In this regard, the statements by Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, whose Islington North constituency includes the area, and London Mayor Sadiq Khan, were especially politically disarming in concealing the reality of events.

Neither made any warning as to the uses to which the attack would be put from a government intent on further dismantling civil liberties. Khan denounced “terrorism, whether it’s Islamist-inspired or inspired by others.” Saying Londoners would “remain strong and united,” he said Londoners should “get out there and celebrate what’s great” about the city. Corbyn condemned “terror on the streets ... in the communities ... We have to all reach out and feel their pain and their stress.”

The Muslim Welfare Centre, outside which the attack took place, had only at the weekend held a memorial meeting to Jo Cox. The Labour MP was murdered in West Yorkshire by a right-wing terrorist during the June 2016 referendum on British membership of the European Union. Throughout the campaign, politicians competed to whip up anti-migrant and anti-Muslim sentiment.

Thomas Mair shouted “Britain First” as he shot Cox three times and stabbed her 15 times in broad daylight near the local library in Birstall, near Leeds. Britain First is the name of a UK fascist group. When first arrested, he described himself as a “political activist.” In court he said, “My name is death to traitors, freedom for Britain.”

Although a search of his home had provided extensive evidence of indirect links to fascist and far-right groups, little effort was made to explore his political sympathies during the trial. He was found guilty and sentenced to life imprisonment for murder.

Police records show an increase in Islamophobic incidents following the London Bridge killings, with 20 recorded on June 6, the highest daily tally for 2017. Commenters on social media were quick to point out that no politicians or columnists were demanding to know how Osborne had been “radicalised” and by whom.



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