

What drove Darren Osborne to commit the London anti-Muslim terrorist attack?

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In the early hours of June 19, a man with no apparent history of racism deliberately ran over a group of Muslim worshipers who had just left the Finsbury Park Mosque in London.

The attack left one person, Makram Ali, dead of multiple injuries. Eleven others were injured. The perpetrator, who was identified as 47-year-old Cardiff resident Darren Osborne, was charged last Friday at Westminster Magistrates Court with terror-related murder and attempted murder.

On Tuesday, Osborne appeared at London's Old Bailey court by video link from Belmarsh prison. In a short hearing he confirmed only his name. Osborne will next appear at the Old Bailey on July 20 for a preliminary hearing.

The Westminster Magistrates Court heard that Osborne was motivated by "extreme political views and a personal hatred of Muslims" when he carried out the "deliberate and premeditated attack."

During the murderous assault, Osborne shouted, "I'm going to kill all Muslims—I did my bit." He was quickly apprehended by people marking Ramadan at the Finsbury Park mosque before being bundled into a police van, where he continued to goad the crowd.

According to accounts, this outburst of murderous Islamophobia could not have been anticipated. Based on the information that has emerged so far, this is a man who had led a troubled and chaotic life, someone apparently prone to violence, but who, until very recently, was not known to hold racist or anti-Muslim views.

His neighbour of five years, Saleem Naema, told the press, "I just can't believe that he did that. If I ever needed anything, he would come."

Another neighbour, Khadijeh Sherizi, said, "He has been so normal. He lives next door. He seemed polite and pleasant to me." She described how hers and Osborne's children would regularly play together.

His 72-year-old mother Christine told the press that her son was "not a terrorist and had never shown any hatred towards Muslims." Osborne's sister, Nicola, denied her

brother was political, saying, "He wouldn't even know who the prime minister is. I've never heard him say anything about Muslims or anything racist."

However, she went on to say he had been "troubled for a long time" and "tried to kill himself six, eight weeks ago." After throwing himself into the river in Cardiff, "He asked to be taken into care, to be sectioned [taken to a hospital under the Mental Health Act], but they wouldn't do it."

His mother said he was "disturbed" and had been on medication for mental health problems.

Osborne and his partner Sarah, who is the mother of their four children, had moved to Cardiff from Weston-super-Mare in 2006 to make a "fresh start." One of those who knew him there said, "He would just drink too much and flip the switch, I guess."

His personal situation worsened after he and his partner separated some weeks ago and he was living rough, telling a local barber he had been sleeping in a tent in the woods "for a couple of weeks."

Osborne seems to have received little professional support to help him overcome his disastrous personal and social situation. And so he seems to have spiralled further out of control.

He spent much of the two days before the attack drunk. A regular from the Hollybush pub near Osborne's home in the Pentwyn suburb of Cardiff told how on Saturday, "He got chucked out as he was so drunk. He was cursing Muslims and saying he would do some damage."

Another added, "He was kicked out of here, the landlord said, for shouting about Islam. When he came in, the landlord said he was on his own and started shouting, 'I'll kill every f**king Muslim.'"

According to the press, Osborne was then seen nearby after midnight on Sunday, drunk and asleep in a large Luton van he had hired. A local resident said he saw the van parked with a man inside he later recognized as Osborne. "I could smell alcohol on him and he was grunting and groaning. I poked him but he didn't respond, so I called 101 [the police]."

A spokesman for South Wales Police said officers attended the vehicle in the early hours of Sunday morning, but as no offences had been committed, took no further action. “A male was asleep inside the vehicle, which showed no signs of having been driven recently,” they reported.

Twenty-four hours later, Osborne travelled the 150 miles to London, driving the van into a group of Muslim worshipers who were helping Makram Ali outside the mosque after he had collapsed on the pavement.

Osborne was clearly in great mental anguish. But why should this lead a man with no evident background of racism to suddenly commit such a heinous crime?

According to Security Minister Ben Wallace, he was not known to the security services and there was no immediate evidence that Osborne was an active member of a far-right organisation.

This has led to media and police claims that Osborne was “self-radicalised.” This is not a term usually used to describe the perpetrators of terror attacks. The general line is that the guilty parties were acting in pursuit of an ideological, usually political, agenda.

Commentators on social media quickly pointed out that no politicians or newspaper columnists were demanding to know how Osborne had been “radicalised” and by whom.

It appears that Osborne took all the anger and distress caused by his dire personal, mental and social circumstances and channelled them into anti-Muslim violence. In doing so, however, he was not simply acting on his own “spontaneous” initiative. The scapegoating of refugees, migrants and Muslims for all of Britain’s problems is now the stock in trade of the government and the media.

The first indication of Osborne’s “radicalisation” was his setting up of a Twitter account in the early hours of June 3, the same day as the London Bridge/Borough Market terrorist attack, in which eight people were killed and 48 injured, 10 critically.

Finsbury Park is the fourth terrorist attack in Britain since March—one in Manchester and three in London—which have claimed 36 lives so far. It is the first terrorist attack targeting Muslims. In the previous three instances—indeed, as with all earlier terror attacks—the perpetrators were known to the intelligence services. If they had been left free to plot their deadly attacks, it was because they were part of a network of operatives utilised by British imperialism in its regime-change operations in the Middle East.

In an effort to conceal the deadly results of British foreign policy, politicians and the media routinely blame “Islamic ideology” and complain that Muslims in Britain are not “doing enough” to combat Islamic extremism. Meanwhile, they bang the drums for greater British military participation in Syria, Libya and elsewhere.

In the wake of the June 3 attack, right-wing tabloids stepped up this campaign, with Rupert Murdoch’s *Sun* calling for an end to “large-scale Islamic immigration” and the “permanent closure” of mosques “caught hosting anti-British views.” 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 tweeted that “Western men” should “rise up.” She denounced London for harbouring Muslim extremists through its “endless tolerance to those who harm us.”

Osborne used his Twitter account to follow 32 accounts. These included several news outlets as well as those of Paul Golding and Jayda Fransen, leaders of the far-right party Britain First.

“Britain First,” it should be noted, was what was shouted out by Thomas Mair as he fatally shot and stabbed Labour MP Jo Cox on June 16, 2016 in West Yorkshire. This was during the referendum on Britain’s membership of the European Union, in which politicians from all parties and the media served up an almost daily diet of anti-immigrant rhetoric.

Likewise, the campaign for the general election on June 8 was pitched in terms of “security,” with Theresa May claiming she was the only one who could keep Britain “safe.” Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn was presented as the “terrorist’s friend.”

The constant ratcheting up of nationalism and anti-Muslim chauvinism has fuelled an explosive rise in racist incidents and, in particular, those of an Islamophobic nature.

While the number of racist hate crimes in London rose from 10,363 in 2007 to 16,164 in 2016, a 55 percent rise, Islamophobic hate crimes saw a 10-fold increase in the same period (see graph below).

Far from countering the outpouring of xenophobia in the press, Corbyn and the Labour Party are doing everything in their power to show that they can be trusted with the reins of state. While Corbyn condemned “terror on the streets” following the Finsbury Park attack, he has made no statement warning how such attacks are being used to justify the destruction of democratic rights and creation of the infrastructure of a police state, including the monitoring of all telecommunications and Internet traffic.



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