

Parsons Green bomb seized on to call for greater internet censorship

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An 18-year-old orphaned Iraqi asylum seeker, Ahmed Hassan, has been charged with attempted murder and causing an explosion following the September 15 failed “bucket bomb” attack on a packed underground train at London’s Parsons Green tube station.

Around 30 people were injured, either by the “fireball” which erupted from a builder’s bucket in a supermarket bag or the panicked crush that followed the explosion. One woman suffered severe burns and will require months of hospital treatment.

The attack was used by both the British and US authorities as an opportunity to call for extended internet monitoring and censorship, as the bomb’s design has been circulating on the internet for years.

In the event, it seems that only the detonator exploded. Had the device functioned as intended the impact would have been much worse. According to the prosecutor at Westminster Magistrates Court, the bomb contained “many hundred grams” of triacetone triperoxide [TATP], a highly unstable explosive substance that can be concocted with easily purchased ingredients, and “an electronic timer and several containers of quantities of metal shrapnel including knives, screws and similar items clearly designed to cause severe injuries and death to those nearby.”

Hassan is accused of having constructed the device in a garden shed at the home of his foster parents, having bought some bomb components from Amazon.

Only hours after the explosion, before anything was made public about the suspected attacker, the bomb’s design and apparently homemade character and before any arrests had even been made, US President Donald Trump tweeted his view of the perpetrators as “sick and demented people who were in the sights of Scotland Yard [Metropolitan Police].”

He continued, “The internet is their main recruitment

tool which we must cut off & use better!”

Prime Minister Theresa May said she was “working with the internet companies” to “deal with the terrorist propaganda, with the extremist propaganda, with the hatred that is put out across the Internet.”

Last week, May met with French President Emmanuel Macron and Italian Premier Paolo Gentiloni at a meeting at the United Nations that included representatives of Google, Facebook and Microsoft. Speaking for the trio, Macron threatened to “name and shame” companies that do not comply with their demands.

May asserted, “Industry needs to go further and faster in automating the detection and removal of terrorist content online, and developing technological solutions that prevent it being uploaded in the first place.”

Former CIA director, General David Petraeus, told the BBC that governments had to look at “the tools and the authorities necessary to eliminate if possible and at the very least reduce very dramatically the way Islamists have been able to use cyberspace.” He called the internet a “whole new domain of warfare.”

May, Petraeus, Trump *et al* are calling for carte blanche censorship and powers to exclude whole sections of the population from internet use as and when politically convenient.

Ultimate responsibility for the attack lies with the ongoing neo-colonial occupation and destruction of swathes of the Middle East by the United States and its British and European allies.

The alleged attacker, Ahmed Hassan, is clearly a traumatised youth. He was orphaned when his parents were killed in Iraq. He arrived illegally in the UK in 2015 and applied for asylum. He has been followed carefully by the British authorities from the moment he set foot in the country. According to an unnamed

immigration officer who “mentored” Hassan, he had also been tortured in Iraq and was suffering from post-traumatic stress. He is said to have expressed “anger at Tony Blair,” then prime minister who, in 2003, sent thousands of British forces into Iraq as a part of the US-led invasion and occupation.

After arriving in the UK, Hassan was placed by Surrey Council and Spelthorne Council with Penny and Ronald Jones—from all accounts a dedicated and caring couple from Sunbury, who have, over the years, fostered hundreds of vulnerable children. The retired couple, aged 71 and 81, had only returned to foster care a few months ago to deal with the influx of refugee children. The couple, said to be in “shell shock,” reportedly had severe problems with Hassan.

According to the *Daily Mail*, Hassan had already been referred to the government’s anti-Islamic Prevent programme, intended to identify young people in danger of being radicalised, “several months ago”, by Surrey County Council. Neighbours reported that police had visited the Jones’ house at least five times in the four weeks prior to the attack.

Trump’s statement that the attacker was known to the British authorities was borne out by a report in the *Daily Mail*. It cited neighbours of Ronald and Penelope Jones who said that Hassan (then unnamed) was detained by police at the same tube station days before the attack. Serena Barber said, “I know about two weeks ago he was arrested by police at Parsons Green, for what I don’t know, and returned back to Penny and Ron. After that Penny said she was going to have to stop caring for him, she couldn’t handle him.”

Hassan was arrested at the port of Dover the morning after the explosion. Over subsequent days another six people were arrested in Newport and Cardiff, South Wales, Sunbury, Surrey and in Hounslow, London. All have been released, having been held for days without charge.

One Yahyah Faroukh, is a 21-year-old fast food worker from Hounslow, and a former foster child of the Jones couple. Faroukh too is a refugee, a Syrian who left Damascus in 2012. He was arrested the day after the attack and held for five days.

Faroukh was seized outside his workplace at a fast food restaurant by undercover police, who wrapped him in plastic to preserve forensic evidence before bundling him away. His picture and recent travel details were

broadcast across the media. Faroukh’s mother suffered a heart attack following her son’s arrest and is now in a critical condition. The young man’s father also died recently. His employer has been subject to “abuse, threats, anger and hatred” and has demanded an apology from the Metropolitan Police.

Hassan and Faroukh’s circumstances have shed further light on the treatment of unaccompanied children, who arrive as asylum seekers in Britain, and their vulnerability. According to the Home Office, 11 percent of all asylum applications are from children who arrive in Britain alone. Between June 2016 and June 2017, 2,944 unaccompanied children applied for asylum. Most were from Libya and Syria. In 2016, 1,376 were from Syria. Unaccompanied children are placed in foster care until they become adults.

Fostering and adoption agencies, along with refugee support groups have expressed concerns that the May government will also use the bombing as a pretext to create further obstacles to settling child refugees within the UK.

Earlier this year, the British government dropped the so-called “Dubs amendment,” which committed the government to accepting 3,000 unaccompanied minors. Home Secretary Amber Rudd claimed “The specified number of 350 children ... reasonably meets the intention and spirit behind the provision.” The British government excused its filthy evasion by claiming that the programme could “incentivise” children to travel to Europe.

Officially, there are around 300,000 unaccompanied child refugees worldwide, although this is acknowledged to be only a fraction of the real figure.



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