

At least 10 killed in deliberate attack on Toronto pedestrians

Keith Jones
24 April 2018

Ten people were killed yesterday and at least 15 injured when a rented van mounted the sidewalk, then raced south for well over a mile in a busy commercial area of northern Toronto. Numerous witnesses said the driver appeared in a rage and deliberately veered to hit pedestrians.

At the time, the streets of “downtown North York,” an area that is home to large numbers of Chinese, Korean and Iranian immigrants, were full of people enjoying a warm sunny day after a long winter.

The first casualties were reported just after 1:30 p.m. local time.

Ultimately the vehicle came to a stop and the driver, on getting out, was challenged by a police officer who ordered him to get down on the ground.

At first, the driver did not do this. He shouted back “Kill me” several times, as well as repeatedly saying that he had a gun. The cop, gun in hand, responded by repeating his order for the suspect to lie on the ground. Eventually he did so.

Toronto police have identified the van driver as 25-year-old Alek Minassian of Richmond Hill, a Toronto suburb. They say Minassian was not previously known to them and have, as yet, filed no charges against him.

As of 11:00 p.m. Toronto time, police had said nothing about a possible motive, only that they have not definitively ruled anything out.

Earlier in the evening, federal Public Safety Minister Ralph Goodale said: “The events that happened on the street behind us are horrendous. But they do not appear to be connected in any way to national security, based on the information available at this time.”

Goodale and Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland were in downtown Toronto at the time of the pedestrian attack. They were hosting meetings with their G-7

counterparts in preparation for the annual G-7 summit, which will be held in Charlevoix, Quebec this June.

Like imperialist governments around the world, Canada’s has systematically invoked the purported threat of Islamist terrorism since 2001 to justify a massive increase in the power and reach of the national security apparatus, and participation in a series of ruinous, predatory wars in the Middle East, Africa and Central Asia.

Stephen Harper and his Conservative government seized on two “lone wolf” attacks carried out by Islamist terrorist sympathizers in October 2014 to declare Canada “under siege” and push through legislation, Bill C-51, that gives the security-intelligence agencies sweeping new powers. These include virtually unlimited access to Canadians’ government-held personal information and the right for the country’s premier intelligence agency, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), to break virtually any law in “disrupting” threats to public security.

Justin Trudeau and his Liberals voted for Bill C-51, while claiming that it went “too far.” Predictably, however, their promise to “fix it” when they came to power resulted in few and largely cosmetic changes. And some of these gave Canada’s signals intelligence agency and “Five Eyes” partner, the Communications Security Establishment, new powers to spy on Canadians and engage in cyber-war.

Commentators on US networks expressed surprise that the police did not open fire on Minassian when he did not immediately surrender. In fact, Canadian police have a long record of shooting, tasering, and killing people in obvious mental distress.

According to a recent CBC investigation, more than 70 percent of the 460 people who have died in

encounters with police across Canada since 2000 suffered from mental health problems or substance abuse problems or both.

This includes 17-year-old Syrian immigrant Sammy Yatim, who was gunned down in 2013 by a Toronto cop on an immobilized streetcar after he had exposed himself and prevailed on all the passengers to disembark by wielding a knife. Following a public outcry, the cop who shot nine bullets into Yatim's body was convicted, but only of "attempted murder," because his lawyer successfully argued the initial volley of bullets that killed Yatim was justified.

For close to two decades, the Canadian public has been inundated with government and media propaganda about the threat of Islamist terrorism. Such propaganda almost invariably excludes any discussion of the relationship of forces such as Al Qaeda and ISIS to the machinations of US imperialism in the greater Middle East and of its allies, Canada included. The *Ottawa Citizen* did reveal, however, that Canadian Armed Forces' personnel involved in the 2011 regime-change war in Libya referred to themselves as "Al Qaeda's air force."

For all the lurid accounts of the threat of Islamist terrorism, the most lethal terrorist attack in Canada since 2001 was the January 2017 attack on a Quebec City mosque, which left six worshippers dead. The shooter, Alexandre Bissonette, was an admirer of Donald Trump and France's Marine Le Pen and heavily influenced by right-wing Quebec nationalists who have portrayed immigrants, especially Muslims, as a threat to "Quebec values."



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact