

Arsonist attacks mosque in Southern California

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An arsonist set fire to the Islamic Center of Escondido, in north San Diego County in Southern California this past Sunday, leaving behind a note referencing the fascist terrorist rampage at two New Zealand mosques, which left 50 dead and as many injured just two weeks ago.

There were seven people inside Masjid Dar ul Arqam when the incident occurred shortly after 3:00 a.m. on Sunday, March 24. One person who was awake at the time, spotted the flames and alerted the group, which was able to extinguish the fire before it spread.

Investigators found a note left by the arsonist on the driveway of the mosque that referenced the March 15 massacre by Brenton Tarrant, who used a semi-automatic rifle to attack worshipers at the Al Noor Mosque and the Linwood Islamic Centre in Christchurch, New Zealand.

Dustin Craun, the executive director of the San Diego office of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), noted the civil rights organization's outrage in a statement Monday. "It is disturbing enough that some sick individual would attempt to burn a house of worship to the ground, but referencing the slayings in New Zealand is beyond the pale ... While the majority of humanity has responded to the tragedy to draw closer to one another and refute hatred, a violent and hate-filled minority seeks further divisions."

Yusef Miller, a spokesman for the Islamic community in Escondido, told reporters that "Everyone is on edge here today ... When they connected it to New Zealand, it gave us a more real fear that something outlandish might happen."

Following the New Zealand massacre, CAIR has reissued copies of its safety guide, "Best Practices for Mosque and Community Safety."

In an opening letter, CAIR's National Executive

Director, Nihad Awad, notes that "The number of bias-motivated incidents targeting mosques and other Islamic institutions has grown in parallel with the rise in anti-Muslim sentiment promoted by a well-coordinated and well-financed 'Islamophobia machine.' Incidents targeting American Muslim institutions have included arson and bomb attacks, shootings, hate vandalism, and threats of violence."

An investigation by the *San Diego Union Tribune* has found that right-wing fascist groups have been meeting on college campuses in the region, intimidating students, lecturers and professors. The white nationalist group Identity Evropa held a private meeting at the California state college campus, San Diego State University, according to a leak of more than 200,000 online chat logs from the white supremacist group by Unicorn Riot, a non-profit educational media collective.

Identity Evropa helped organize the right-wing rally in Charlottesville, Virginia in 2017, where one protester was killed and dozens injured by a white supremacist. The chats indicate the group has been attempting to "infiltrate" the right-wing libertarian group Turning Point USA and had successfully been able to man a table by the College Republicans to push their views. Identity Evropa members referred to Islam as a "cancer" and warned of Muslims holding public office in predominantly white countries.

These far-right and fascistic elements are being promoted from the highest levels of the state around the world, including in the United States. In Tarrant's manifesto he declared that US president Donald Trump is seen as "a symbol of renewed white identity."

Trump defended the white supremacists who rampaged in Charlottesville as "very fine people" and has repeatedly referred to immigrants seeking to cross

the US-Mexico border as “invaders.”

Following the New Zealand attack Trump deleted a Tweet citing an interview with right-wing news site Breitbart in which he stated, “I can tell you I have the support of the police, the support of the military, the support of the Bikers for Trump—I have the tough people, but they don’t play it tough—until they go to a certain point, and then it would be very bad, very bad.”

New Zealand officials have refused to explain why they did not prevent Tarrant’s attack despite his many public statements voicing hatred of immigrants, Muslims and socialists, including threats of violence.

The New Zealand police continue to charge that Tarrant flew “under the radar” despite the fact that he had posted on social media his plans to “attack against the invaders” and emailed his manifesto before his attack to over 70 people, including the prime minister and media outlets.

Additionally, Tarrant had traveled to many European countries to meet with nationalist groups, as well as to Pakistan and North Korea, countries that are under heavy state surveillance. Tarrant claimed that he had received a “blessing” from Norwegian far-right terrorist Anders Behring Breivik and had prepared his attack for over two years.

The manifesto has now been banned under the pretext of preventing the spread of “hate speech,” but the deeper concern by authorities and state officials is that the public would begin to make the connection that the same xenophobic language used by fascists against immigrants and Muslims are the very same words spewed out of the mouths of the highest state officials, including the president of the United States.

It is within this context that the Socialist Equality Party is hosting a series of meetings in the US in April with Christoph Vandreier, on the lessons of the 1930s and the struggle against fascism today. Vandreier, Deputy National Secretary of the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (SGP) and a widely respected leader of the fight against fascism in Europe, will present his new book, *Why are They Back? Historical Falsification, Political Conspiracy, and the Return of Fascism in Germany*.

Appeals to the state to censor the internet and crack down on the far right will do nothing to prevent their growth, as the ruling class is increasingly turning toward fascistic and dictatorial forms of rule to

suppress growing anti-capitalist and anti-austerity sentiment by billions of workers, students, and youth throughout the world. Only an organized international socialist movement based in the working class can defeat these right-wing forces.



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