

Hostages released and suspect dead after 10-hour standoff in Texas

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A 10-hour standoff at a Texas synagogue in the Dallas-Fort Worth area ended on Saturday evening with the release of four hostages and the death of the hostage taker. In a nighttime news conference, authorities said the man was killed in a shooting but did not answer a question about whether he was shot by law enforcement or if the gunshot was self-inflicted.

The information supplied by the police and FBI has multiple gaps and inconsistencies, and the investigation is said to be continuing. None of the hostages has yet given a public account of the ordeal. All that is certain in the murky incident so far is that the hostages were free and out of danger before 44-year-old British citizen Malik Faisal Akram met his death.

During a morning service at Congregation Beth Israel in Colleyville, a town 15 miles northeast of Fort Worth, Akram took a rabbi and three others hostage. News reports claimed that he was armed when he entered the synagogue, but this has not been confirmed by the FBI or local police.

The morning service was being livestreamed on Facebook and Zoom. According to witnesses watching the event online, Akram could be heard in the video saying he had a bomb. According to the *Fort Worth Telegram*, the video image was frozen, but the audio could be heard of a man who was “ranting at times with an angry voice,” speaking about Islam, using profanities and saying repeatedly that he was going to die. Law enforcement has not confirmed the existence of a bomb.

The *Telegram* report added, “The man talked about religion and repeatedly mentioned someone he called his sister, whom he said he wanted released from prison. It sounded as if he was on the phone, perhaps with police negotiators. The man said a few times he didn’t want anyone hurt, and he has mentioned his

children.”

Colleyville Police Chief Michael Miller said that 200 police and FBI agents were on the scene during the day. The North Tarrant Regional SWAT Team responded first and evacuated residents from nearby homes and set up a perimeter.

The FBI arrived to assume control of the scene with its own SWAT and elite hostage force out of Quantico, Virginia, and began negotiating with Akram. FBI Special Agent in Charge Matthew DeSarno said, “We do believe that, from engaging with the subject, he was singularly focused on one issue, and it was not specifically related to the Jewish community.”

At 5:00 p.m., one male hostage was released and unharmed. A video shot by a Dallas WFAA-TV photographer Josh Stephen, shows the other three hostages leaving the building at 9:15 p.m. as FBI agents surround the building. A man holding a gun can be seen at the door where the hostages exited and then returning to the interior of the building. This is followed by numerous gunshots and a several flash bangs go off.

Akram’s brother Gulbar issued a statement on behalf of his family apologizing to the victims and saying that his brother had “mental health issues.” The family statement said, “We would also like to add that any attack on any human being be it a Jew, Christian or Muslim etc. is wrong and should always be condemned.”

The Texas Department of Public Safety said Akram demanded to see his “sister,” not an actual relative, but a political prisoner, Aafia Siddiqui, serving an 86-year prison sentence on charges of attempted murder and assault of United States officers and employees in Afghanistan in 2008.

The 49-year-old Pakistani neuroscientist is jailed at the Federal Medical Center Carswell, a women’s

prison in Fort Worth. She had studied in the US from 1990 and earned a Ph.D. at Brandeis University in 2001. She later returned to Pakistan.

There are conflicting accounts of what transpired after this. Siddiqui says she was arrested by the Pakistani secret police, the ISI, in 2003, handed over to the Americans and then held in Bagram Prison for five years, during which time she was interrogated and tortured.

The US government claims she was not arrested until 2008 and that while she was being interrogated, she seized a weapon and attempted to kill a U.S. Army Captain “while engaged in ... official duties.” This blaming of the victim/prisoner—“shot while attempting to escape”—is a familiar concoction of police and military authorities around the world.

Siddiqui was extradited to the US from Afghanistan and stood trial in New York City in 2010, when she was convicted and sentenced to 86 years in prison. The case was a major political issue in Pakistan for a number of years.

The synagogue incident became the occasion for the American media to rehash the “Lady Al Qaeda” narrative that was supplied to the judge and jury during Siddiqui’s trial, and that led to the savage prison sentence. The Sunday television talk shows said nothing about the howling absurdities in the case against Siddiqui, relying, as usual, on the unsupported assertions of the US intelligence agencies.

She was identified as an Al-Qaeda courier and financier by Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, the Guantanamo Bay prisoner called “the principal architect of the 9/11 attacks” by the US government. This “evidence” is hardly persuasive, since Mohammed was tortured by the CIA for years and waterboarded at least 183 times.

Through an attorney, Siddiqui issued a statement denying any knowledge of Akram and deploring the attack on the synagogue.



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