

Palestinian-American man stabbed after attending anti-genocide protest in Austin, Texas

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On Sunday evening in the West Campus area of the University of Texas at Austin in Austin, Texas, Zachariah Doar, a 23-year-old Palestinian-American, was stabbed in the chest after attending a pro-Palestinian protest held at the Capitol.

Doar, his father Nizar, and Doar's three friends had traveled from Dallas to attend the second statewide protest that was attended by an estimated 15,000 people in the Texas capital, organized by the Austin for Palestine Coalition.

After the protest, Nizar left Zachariah and his friends in Austin, to make the drive back home to Dallas.

Nizar told the *Austin Chronicle*, "I just left my son in good condition. I told him, 'Let's go to Dallas, I will pay for your dinner, you and your friends, I want you to come with us.' They're young, they decided to try the good food in Austin. They stayed. An hour and a half, hour and 45 minutes [into the drive] and I get a terrible call saying, 'Uncle, you have to turn back.'"

At around 7 p.m., at an intersection near the campus, Doar and three friends got into an altercation with Bert James Baker, who began shouting racial slurs at the four friends and tore off a keffiyah, the traditional Palestinian scarf, emblazoned with the inscription "Free Palestine," which was attached to their car. The four exited the car to fight Baker off after which Baker stabbed Doar in the chest, breaking one of his ribs.

Baker, 36, was arrested at the scene and charged with aggravated assault with a deadly weapon. The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), a Muslim civil rights advocacy group, called for hate-crime charges to be brought against Baker.

"He's in pain, he's in agony," Nizar Doar stated before a press conference on Tuesday, accompanied by

representatives of CAIR. "The first thing that came to mind is, 'I'm going to lose my son,'" Doar said. He added that his son and his son's wife just had a baby. "I was thinking, how am I going to tell them that I failed to protect my son?" He explained that after a successful surgery his son is expected to make a full recovery.

Doar continued, "The city of Austin failed to protect my son. Greg Abbott failed to protect his citizens. Joe Biden failed to protect this country. This has come to haunt us in our homeland, in Texas. I beg you to call an end for this madness, and stop the genocide in Gaza."

The Austin Police Department in a statement Tuesday said that they believe the crime is a "bias-motivated incident," and said the crime will be reviewed by the Hate Crimes Review Committee. "Once the committee reviews the details of this case, the information will be provided to the Travis County District Attorney's Office and/or the County Attorney's Office."

CAIR-Dallas Director Mustafa Carroll told the media Tuesday, "No one should be targeted and attacked because they put Palestinian-themed items on their vehicle. Anti-Palestinian racism and anti-Muslim bigotry have no place in Texas or anywhere else in our nation."

Fayyaz Shah, the chair of CAIR Austin's board, said in a statement, "We encourage law enforcement to file hate crime charges against the suspect and we also encourage federal law enforcement to open a hate crime probe."

The attack is the latest in a series of anti-Muslim violence against Palestinians since the US/Israel genocide in Gaza was launched in October.

On October 14, in a Chicago suburb, prosecutors

charged Joseph Czuba with the stabbing death of six-year-old Palestinian-American Wadea Al-Fayoume, and the stabbing of the boy's mother, Hanaan Shahin, who survived, but was badly wounded.

On November 25 in Burlington Vermont, three Palestinian-American students, Hisham Awartani, Kinnan Abdalhamid, and Tahseen Ahmed were shot while walking to Awartani's grandmother's house. Prosecutors have charged Jason J. Eaton, a self-described libertarian and a believer of far-right anti-vaccination conspiracy theories in the attack. The three students survived, with Awartani left paralyzed below the chest.

At Columbia University, pro-Palestinian student demonstrators were allegedly sprayed with a chemical weapon known to be used by the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) against Palestinians in the occupied territories. It has been alleged that two students who previously served in the IDF are the perpetrators.

Illustrating the rise of anti-Muslim bigotry amid the Biden administration's full backing for Israel's devastating rampage in Gaza, CAIR reports receiving 2,171 complaints of anti-Muslim and anti-Palestinian bias for the period from October 7 to December 8 across the United States, nearly double the amount reported in the same period the year before.

Zainab Haider, an organizer with the Austin for Palestine Coalition, stated, "Our city officials have created a climate of fear. Many of them have been silent on Palestine. And now the silence of the mayor [Democrat Kirk Watson] can only be seen as condoning this violence."

The attack in Austin comes amid massive opposition to the US/Israel genocide as expressed in months of demonstrations attended by millions across the world, while the ruling class in the US and Europe seek to smear the protesters as antisemitic.

This filthy reactionary campaign against millions of youth and workers opposed to the genocide has led to outbursts of fascistic violence and anti-democratic attacks against any who stand in the way of American imperialism and its main ally in the Middle East.

The blame for the reactionary atmosphere feeding into the anti-Muslim violence can be laid at the doorstep of the White House. Speaking to this responsibility on Tuesday, Nizar Doar shared a message from his son Zachariah in Austin: "Mr. Joe

Biden, I blame you for what happened to me. If you would have called for a ceasefire three months ago, this would have never happened."



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