

British government exploits Manchester synagogue killings to attack anti-genocide protesters

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Within hours of the killing of two Jewish worshippers at a synagogue in Manchester on Thursday, the Labour government and police—backed by a frothing right-wing media—leapt on the tragedy to intensify their crackdown on protests against the Gaza genocide, and the campaign to brand anti-Zionism as “left antisemitism”.

On Thursday morning, on Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the Jewish calendar, a man drove into worshippers outside the Heaton Park Hebrew Congregation synagogue. He then got out of his vehicle and began stabbing people, before trying to enter the synagogue. The attacker was later named as Jihad Al-Shamie, a 35-year-old British citizen of Syrian descent.

Armed police officers arrived within seven minutes and shot Al-Shamie dead. It emerged the following day that police gunfire also killed one of the two victims, Adrian Daulby, aged 53, who was shot as he helped to secure the synagogue doors. Another man was seriously injured by police fire and is in hospital alongside two others with wounds from Al-Shamie’s car and knife attack.

Police feared Al-Shamie was wearing an explosive device, but it was deemed not to be “viable” after investigation. Three people have been arrested “on suspicion of commission, preparation and instigation of acts of terrorism”.

Before the attacker was even named, Israel’s foreign minister Gideon Sa’ar lyingly conflated his actions with mass protests against the genocide in Gaza, posting on X: “The truth must be told: blatant and rampant antisemitic and anti-Israeli incitement, as well as calls of support for terror, have recently become a widespread phenomenon in the streets of London, in cities across Britain, and on its campuses.”

Calling for political repression, he accused, “The authorities in Britain have failed to take the necessary

action to curb this toxic wave of antisemitism and have effectively allowed it to persist.”

This was echoed by Gideon Falter of Britain’s witch-hunting Campaign Against Antisemitism, who said, “It has been a long time since British Jews had faith in our politicians, police and institutions. Their appeasement of extremists—especially those of the far-left and radical Islamists—is what has made today’s attack inevitable.”

This opened the floodgates for demands that protests against the Israeli government’s war crimes and British complicity be called off, including one scheduled for this Saturday by the Defend our Juries (DOJ) group.

DOJ have organised regular demonstrations in London’s Parliament Square in opposition to the government’s proscription of the protest group Palestine Action. At these protests, over 1,500 people have been arrested under the Terrorism Act simply for displaying a sign reading, “I oppose genocide. I support Palestine Action.” Almost 1,700 people have been arrested nationally for the same offence.

The Palestine Coalition, whose leadership includes the Palestine Solidarity Campaign and Stop the War Coalition, is facing demands to call off its scheduled October 11 national demonstration, also in London. Hundreds of thousands are expected to attend an event marking two years since the beginning of a genocide which has killed and maimed hundreds of thousands of Palestinians and reduced their home to rubble.

Just hours after Thursday’s attack, London’s Metropolitan Police Assistant Commissioner Ade Adelekan wrote to DOJ requesting it cancel its protest, with the justification that “the Met is stepping up reassurance and protective security operations across the capital with a particular focus on London’s Jewish and Muslim communities” and the protests “draw officers

away from the communities they serve".

DOJ refused, responding, "We urge you to choose to prioritise protecting the community rather than arresting those peacefully holding signs in opposition to the absurd and draconian ban of a domestic direct action group."

The Palestine Coalition has likewise refused to call off the October 11 protest.

After a rally Thursday evening outside Downing Street to protest Israel's illegal seizure of the Global Sumud/Freedom Flotilla—and the complicity of the British and other governments—the Labour government cracked down harder. Police violently attacked protesters, kettling them and arresting 40 at a relatively small demonstration.

Newly installed home secretary Shabana Mahmood declared herself "very disappointed to see those protests going ahead last night. I think that behaviour is fundamentally un-British. I think it is dishonourable."

Protesters could have postponed their action against a genocide taking scores of lives a day—with the US President threatening "all hell" by the weekend—because, she said with a half smile, "The issues that are driving those protests have been going on now for some time. They don't look like they're going to come to an end any day soon."

Instead of demonstrating against an ongoing genocide protesters ought to have shown "some humanity" and "given a community that has suffered deep loss just a day or two to process what has happened and carry on with the grieving process," Mahmood added.

In the warped world of the Labour Party, it is impossible for a Jewish person to be horrified by both Al-Shamie's murderous attack and Israel's genocide. The noxious Zionist myth is that to be Jewish is to be totally aligned with the State of Israel and its genocidal government, to the point of being grievously offended by protest against it. If, as is reported, Al-Shamie yelled "this is what you get for killing our children", he was drawing the same amalgam as the British and Israeli governments.

False allegations of antisemitism are being utilised to justify the most naked authoritarianism and repression of anti-war sentiment. Mahmood told reporters of the protests against the Israeli genocide, "Just because you have a freedom, doesn't mean you have to use it."

The UK's Chief Rabbi, Sir Ephraim Mirvis, was more explicit, demanding the anti-genocide marches be banned. Speaking to BBC Radio's *Today*, he declared, "Some of them contain outright antisemitism, outright support for Hamas... You cannot separate the words on our streets, the actions of people in this way, and what inevitably results,

which was yesterday's terrorist attack."

He demanded the government "get a grip on these demonstrations, they are dangerous".

On Friday, Sa'ar said of a conversation with Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper, "I raised the need to fight the pro-Palestinian marches and protests, which bear antisemitic traits, and at times include explicit support for terror.

"I said that this rabid incitement rightly disturbs the Jewish community in Britain deeply and it must be fought aggressively and determinedly. I emphasised that anti-Zionism is a form of antisemitism."

These slanderous claims are amplified in the media, with the *Daily Mail* running a front-page piece by Richard Littlejohn headlined, "two years of hate-filled Palestine marches have led to the intifada striking in Britain". Littlejohn accused the government and police of being "content to stand by while pro-Palestine protesters peddle Jew-hatred on our streets."

While reams of paper have been spent denouncing anti-genocide protests and demanding their suppression, little scrutiny has been given to Al-Shamie and the government's claim that he was not previously known to counter-terrorism police.

Manchester was the scene of a terrorist atrocity in 2017, when Salman Abedi, helped by his brother Hashem, carried out a suicide bombing at Manchester Arena, killing 22 people and injuring over 1,000.

While it was admitted he was known to the intelligence agencies prior to the attack, it only subsequently emerged that Salman, his father Ramadan and brothers Ismail and Hashem were allowed to operate in the war zone of Libya and travel freely between there and the UK for years before the attack.

They were assets of British imperialism: far-right Islamists deployed to aid imperialist foreign policy objectives in Libya and throughout the Middle East—including the overthrow of Muammar Gaddafi. In 2014, Britain's Royal Navy warship HMS *Enterprise* even evacuated the Abedi brothers from Libya, bringing them back to Britain.



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