

Terrorism charges brought against teens who targeted fascist protest with homemade bombs

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Two Pennsylvania teenagers were charged in federal court on Monday for allegedly attempting to use homemade explosives against a group of fascist provocateurs rallying in New York City on Saturday. The devices failed to detonate and caused no injuries.

The two accused, Emir Balat, 18, and Ibrahim Kayumi, 19, face charges of attempting to provide material support to a foreign terrorist organization and use of a weapon of mass destruction, among other charges. If convicted, they could potentially face life sentences.

The incident occurred during a provocation organized by January 6 foot-soldier Jake Lang. Lang's group of around 20 fascists demonstrated in front of Gracie Mansion, the official residence of Mayor Zohran Mamdani, under the banner, "Stop the Islamic Takeover of New York City." Lang has gleefully cheered the killing of Iranians in Trump's criminal war, called for the US to incinerate Muslims with nuclear weapons, and for the military to be deployed against Mayor Mamdani.

The right-wing agitators, vastly outnumbered by a group of counter-protesters, deliberately set out to stoke violence. At least one of them, Ian McGinnis, was arrested for pepper-spraying counter-protesters.

According to the federal complaint released Monday, at approximately 12:15 p.m., Balat lit one of the improvised devices and threw it into the crowd. He received a second device from Kayumi, which he subsequently dropped and attempted to run away from police officers.

Both Balat and Kayumi were arrested on the scene. The devices, according to the complaint, were about the size of a mason jar, wrapped in duct tape, and contained a fuse, nuts and bolts. A preliminary test on one of the devices turned up positive for the explosive TATP.

The complaint also alleges that both waived their Miranda rights upon arrest, with Balat writing that he

pledged allegiance to ISIS and Kayumi saying that he was inspired in part by ISIS. The complaint does not allege that either one had any direct contact with the organization, nor that it was part of any organized bombing campaign.

The US government's charges of "terrorism" and "use of a weapon of mass destruction" come as the Trump administration is escalating its war of extermination against Iran, a country of 90 million people. In contrast to the "mass destruction" posed by the mason jar explosive, the US and its partner, Israel, have dropped thousands of bombs on military and civilian infrastructure throughout the country, bombs like the 1,500-kilogram Tomahawk cruise missile that incinerated a girl's school in Minab, killing at least 165 on the first day of the illegal war. Trump has vowed a surge in the destruction, and the administration declared it will not be bound by any legal or humanitarian constraints.

The US population is deeply hostile to the war, with opinion polls showing the lowest support at the start of any major US conflict. Under these conditions, the eagerness of the government to invoke "terrorism" serves a definite political purpose—to counteract the war's massive unpopularity by whipping up anti-Muslim chauvinism. Trump has staffed his "Department of War" with Christian nationalists like Pete Hegseth, who see the imperialist bloodbath in Iran as part of a holy war. That the Iranian government has no connections with and is bitterly hostile to ISIS matters little, for they are presented as a monolithic "radical Islam."

Little is currently known about Balat and Kayumi, and the possible involvement of state forces to encourage or organize the failed bombing cannot be ruled out. The FBI and New York Police Department have a long and sordid history of concocting terror schemes, attempting to

radicalize targets, exploiting the mentally ill, and in some cases even offering to pay suspects hundreds of thousands of dollars to agree to commit terrorism. The involvement of Jake Lang, who was pardoned by Donald Trump for his role in the January 6 coup attempt, raises further questions about the possible involvement of the state.

Regardless, the incident is already being used to shift politics further to the right. Mamdani has immediately come under attack, including by ex-governor and former opponent Andrew Cuomo. Cuomo, who ran ads accusing Mamdani of being a jihadist during the mayoral race, assailed the mayor for supposedly equating “terrorists” with the fascist Lang. The right-wing media have gone on the offensive, denouncing Mamdani for acknowledging Lang’s white supremacist politics and accusing the mayor of sympathizing with terrorists. Representative Randy Fine of Florida reiterated the fascist calls to deport Mamdani.

Mamdani, for his part, focused much of his carefully worded response on praising the NYPD. During a press conference on Monday, Mamdani appeared alongside his NYPD Commissioner Jessica Tisch and officers who were on the scene on Saturday, “grateful for their continued work to keep New Yorkers safe.”

The right-wing attacks on Mamdani come just weeks after the mayor deepened his alliance with President Trump in a second meeting at the White House—this time less than 48 hours before the launching of the criminal war against Iran. Mamdani’s mild criticisms of Islamophobia and the excesses of the “war on terror” during the campaign notwithstanding, his partnership with Trump and embrace of the NYPD underscore that he offers no alternative to the reactionary political environment cultivated by the ruling class in the United States.



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