

Britain: Anti-Muslim Terrorist Attack in Finsbury Park

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Solidarity with the Muslim community

Joseph Healy principal speaker for Left Unity on the terrorist attack in Finsbury Park.

“The attack today in London on members of the Muslim community in Finsbury Park is appalling and is a direct result of the Islamophobia being peddled every day by not only the far Right but also the gutter press. A spokesman for the Muslim community today contrasted the criticisms and police action against Salafist hate preachers and the lack of action against those on the Far Right who peddle the same message of hate. How ironic that at the weekend members of the same mosque in Finsbury Park had taken part in prayers for Jo Cox, the MP murdered last year by the same Far Right extremists.

The recent rise in hate crime against Muslims, exacerbated by the ISIL inspired terror attacks in Manchester and London, must be resisted at all levels of society. We call for the solidarity of all Londoners and all throughout the country against those preaching Islamophobia and we stand four square behind the Muslim community in this country.”

Joseph Healy, Left Unity

* <http://leftunity.org/solidarity-with-the-muslim-community/>

Finsbury Park Muslims react to the mosque attack: “We felt something was going to happen”

A neighbourhood wakes up to a tragedy its Muslim residents had long feared.

On Sunday, a woman in a hijab and a long gown stood chatting to a white man in a hat and shorts in Finsbury Park. They were watching as kids paraded on an eclectic combination of bicycles in a disability-inclusive cycling event.

Down the hill, under the trees, families of all faiths and none sought refuge from the sweltering heat. Some played keepie uppie; others had tied balloons to branches to celebrate a birthday. It was a typical weekend in my neighbourhood.

The next morning, the park is still sweltering, but empty. In contrast to its dappled silence, the concourse around Finsbury Park station is crowded with TV vans and satellite dishes. Commuters stop to take photos of the cordoned off road, where, around midnight, a van ploughed into a group of Muslims leaving a mosque after Ramadan prayers.

One man died, and eight were injured badly enough to be hospitalised. But the crowd in the morning mostly seem confused.

As the *Daily Mail* felt fit to note in its coverage of the tragedy, Finsbury Park mosque gained notoriety in the 2000s as a home for radical preachers. But this fact reveals almost nothing about the attack that happened overnight.

Finsbury Park is an eco-system that thrives on co-existence: Muslim-owned local shops and restaurants are frequented by customers of all faiths and nationalities – and everyone turns up to the park at the first hint of a cloudless sky.

Members of the Muslim community I speak to, though, are aware that they were targets for attacks. Buhlessi Yann, a young man dressed in a green t-shirt and shorts, had come from the nearby Holloway neighbourhood to lay flowers at a makeshift memorial by the mosque (the attack actually took place outside the nearby Muslim Welfare House).

Yann was praying in the Holloway mosque on Sunday night when he heard what had happened. He went straight to Finsbury Park. "It is our community," he says. "It is very shocking what happened. It is very sad."

Then he adds: "We were feeling [something] was going to happen soon to the Muslim community."

The police are assessing whether London's mosques need more security, but the workers in the halal shops I visit have only a vague idea of what happened.

At Kausar Rafiq's halal butcher shop, passers-by stop in to greet her and say: "Bad night."

"They do whatever they want to do," Rafiq says, when asked about police protection. "They won't listen."

For some locals, though, the scene of the attack has started new conversations about what it means to be from a minority religion in the city. David Curtis, who is Jewish and wears a skull cap, came down especially from his home in a north London suburb to the neighbourhood where his grandparents lived. He is deep in conversation with Bashir (who did not want to give his last name), a young Muslim man from Finsbury Park.

Curtis believes the police are doing their best to crack down on terrorists of all motivations. "These people are on their radar," he says. "One suspects with more resources they could do more. They do what they can."

Bashir, standing astride his bike, notes that with prayers happening several times a day, and worshippers often spilling into the street, there is little the Muslim community can do to protect itself against such attacks.

He himself was confronted in the street days earlier by a man who demanded: “Why are Muslims killing people?” He glances at the scene in front of us, the forest of cameras, commuters, and police. “It was outside this mosque,” he adds.

Julia Rampen

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<http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/uk/2017/06/finsbury-park-muslims-react-mosque-attack-we-fe-it-something-was-going-happen>

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