

United States: British Muslim woman set on fire in Manhattan was 'not targeted in hate crime' (police)

Saturday 17 September 2016, by [SARSOUR Linda](#), [SIMPSON Fiona](#) (Date first published: 13 September 2016).

A British woman who was set on fire while wearing Islamic clothing in New York was not targeted in a hate attack, police have said.

American authorities confirmed they are no longer probing the case as a hate crime after linking the case to similar assaults on non-Muslims, Sky News reported.

Dressed in a hijab – a traditional Muslim garment which covers the hair and shoulders – the Scottish woman was attacked by a man with a lighter as she shopped on Manhattan's Fifth Avenue on Saturday evening.

The victim, a dentist from Glasgow, reportedly felt heat on her left side before realising her blouse was on fire.

As the 35-year-old was frantically patting the flames she saw a man, who was part of a group, walking off with a lighter in his hands, according to the New York City Police Department.

The woman, who has not been identified, was left with a charred hole on her ruined blouse but no injuries.

Officers told Reuters that at least three other women, who were not dressed in Muslim clothing, were threatened with fire by what is believed to be the same group on yesterday.

"The motivation for these crimes is not considered to be 'bias-related' at this time," police said.

No arrests have been made.

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* The Standart. Wednesday 14 September 2016:

<http://www.standard.co.uk/news/crime/british-muslim-woman-set-on-fire-in-manhattan-was-not-targeted-in-hate-crime-a3345236.html>

A Muslim Woman Set on Fire in New York. Now Just Going Out Requires Courage

Muslim American communities are facing the most hostile civic and political environment since days, weeks and months after 9/11. Hate crimes against Muslims or those perceived to be Muslim has risen exponentially in the last year. Bigotry against Muslims has become the norm and often has no consequences. The irresponsible and rhetorical vilification of Muslims in this current election cycle is leading to violent acts against members of a faith community and it must stop.

Each year, I look so forward to Eid Al Adha – the holiest holiday for Muslims worldwide – but not this year. As I watched my daughters prepare for the celebrations with joy, I learned of a horrific crime. A 36-year-old woman dressed in traditional garb was set on fire on Fifth Avenue in Manhattan. She was the same age as me, walking in the city where I was born and raised. This comes at the heels of two Muslim women in Brooklyn who were physically assaulted by a woman as they pushed their babies in strollers.

As if this news wasn't enough, we also learned that a mosque in Fort Pierce, Florida, which Omar Mateen reportedly used to visit, had been set on fire. They had to cancel their planned holiday celebrations as a result. How could I enjoy the day without thinking of them? Instead of celebrating as planned, the community in Florida has to explain to their children why someone would intentionally set their place of worship, their sanctuary, on fire the night before the highest holy holiday.

These horrific acts follow the execution style murders of an imam and his assistant in Ozone Park, and the stabbing of a 60-year old Muslim woman in Queens. These are only the stories that make the headlines. I don't think we know the extent of the impact, trauma and pain of Muslim communities nationwide.

Muslim Americans found themselves caught in a conversation about how close Eid Al Adha was to the 15th anniversary of 9/11. Pundits wondered whether Muslims would alter their annual Eid celebrations for sensitivity purposes. This insinuation both disappointed and outraged me. Muslims, like any other faith community, deserve to be Muslim, and celebrate their high holy holidays. We would never ask that of any other faith community and it should never be asked or implied to Muslim Americans.

Muslim American communities are facing the most hostile civic and political environment since days, weeks and months after 9/11. Hate crimes against Muslims or those perceived to be Muslim has risen exponentially in the last year. All people of faith, Muslims included, should be able to practice their religion freely without fear and intimidation. Bigotry against Muslims has become the norm and often has no consequences. The irresponsible and rhetorical vilification of Muslims in this current election cycle is leading to violent acts against members of a faith community and it must stop.

It is time for all Americans to speak out. When we allow one faith community to be targets then we open the doors for others to be targeted. I believe the worst is yet to come unless more people actively intervene with their voices, their votes and in public acts of solidarity with their Muslim neighbors. In a time of growing tensions we must uphold our fundamental freedom to worship in the land of religious freedom and its why I choose to be unapologetically Muslim every day. As a Muslim woman, not only is wearing my religious headscarf in public an act of faith, but it has become an act of courage.

Linda Sarsour

* "A Muslim Woman Was Set on Fire in New York. Now Just Going Out Requires Courage". The Guardian (UK). September 13, 2016:

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/sep/13/new-york-muslim-woman-set-on-fire-eid-al-adha>

Posted by Portside on September 15, 2016:

<http://portside.org/2016-09-16/muslim-woman-was-set-fire-new-york-now-just-going-out-requires-courage>

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