

Far right attacks on UK Muslims following New Zealand massacre

By Paul Mitchell
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Several right-wing assaults have taken place in Britain since the horrific killing of 50 Muslim worshippers in Christchurch, New Zealand March 15,

Within hours, a 27-year-old man was attacked with a “hammer” and a “batten,” causing injuries to his head, outside a mosque in Whitechapel, East London. The victim had to be taken to hospital for checks before being discharged. The attack started when a gang of white men in their 20s shouted Islamophobic abuse and called the Friday worshippers “terrorists,” according to witnesses. “The suspects returned to their car and left the scene before police arrived,” a spokesperson for London’s Metropolitan Police said.

Despite the incident being filmed by several onlookers, no arrests have been made by the police.

While describing the attack as a “horrible hate crime”, Detective Chief Inspector Sean Channing was desperate to play down its significance. “Whilst there were initial Islamophobic comments made by this group towards the individual which are being treated seriously, I would like to make clear that at no point did the group approach any mosque or congregation in the area... There is no evidence to suggest that the mosque near the area was the intended target.”

On Saturday in Stanwell, near London’s Heathrow Airport, a 50-year-old man went on the rampage with a knife and baseball bat while shouting “All Muslims must die!”

Local residents described him also screaming, “White supremacists rule!” and “Do you wanna die? Well you’re gonna die!” before knifing a young Muslim teenager.

The suspect had previously been arrested for sending threats online.

A 24-year-old Syrian neighbour, Nemer Salem, said he had heard a man shouting racist abuse earlier on Saturday including “some crazy things about Muslims... I’m a Muslim and I got a little bit worried.” Another neighbour

explained, “He never used to be like this, but over the last couple of months it’s like someone’s flipped a switch and he’s a completely different person.”

The alleged assailant was arrested near the scene on suspicion of attempted murder and racially aggravated public order. The victim of the stabbing was taken to hospital with his injuries described as not life-threatening.

On Sunday, Assistant Commissioner Neil Basu, head of the UK’s Counter Terrorism Policing declared, “Whilst this investigation is still in its infancy, it has hallmarks of a terror event, inspired by the far-right, and therefore it has been declared a terrorism incident.”

The confirmation of a right-wing terror attack by Basu makes a mockery of his claims in the immediate aftermath of the Christchurch attack, echoed by the press and politicians, that what happened there was unconnected to the UK. Basu made the ludicrous claim that “there is no intelligence linking these appalling events in Christchurch to the UK.”

But as Socialist Equality Party (UK) national secretary Chris Marsden explained at the launch of the English-language edition of *Why Are They Back? Historical Falsification, Political Conspiracy and the Return of Fascism in Germany* in London Sunday, the Christchurch killer, Australian citizen Brenton Tarrant, was “part of an international network of far-right organisations.” He had been radicalised in Europe including the UK.

In his 73-page “manifesto,” Tarrant made hero-worshipping reference to British fascist Sir Oswald Mosley and Darren Osborne, imprisoned in 2017 after driving a van into worshippers outside Finsbury Park mosque in north London. Osborne had planned to assassinate London Mayor Sadiq Khan and Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, who had been physically assaulted only last month at the same mosque. In his manifesto, Tarrant stated that Sadiq Khan is among three politicians who

should be targeted for assassination.

Marsden explained, “In Britain, the Brexit referendum had been accompanied by a deluge of nationalism. In June 2016, on the eve of the referendum, fascist Thomas Mair had shot and stabbed Labour MP Jo Cox to death. Tarrant had himself written in support of Brexit, that “it was the British people firing back at mass immigration, cultural displacement and globalism, and that’s a great and wonderful thing.”

In February, the trial began regarding a neo-Nazi plot to murder Labour MP Rosie Cooper on behalf of the banned far right group, National Action. Jack Renshaw, 23, bought a machete and carried out research online planning how to kill Cooper for National Action and “white Jihad.” Renshaw has admitted preparing an act of terrorism but has denied being a member of National Action. He is on trial at the Old Bailey alongside Andrew Clarke, 34, and Michal Trubini, 36, from Warrington, who also deny membership of the proscribed organisation—which was banned over its support for the murder of Jo Cox.

This week Harun Khan, Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Britain, the UK’s largest Muslim umbrella body with over 500 affiliated organisations, mosques, charities and schools, said that Britain’s Muslim communities were “living under a palpable sense of fear.”

The Christchurch massacre, Khan continued, “makes the risk of copy-cat attacks here in the UK a real possibility, especially in a climate where we are now fully appreciating the growth in the far-right.”

Khan contrasted the government’s commitment of £14 million to support the security of around 400 synagogues and 150 Jewish schools (equivalent to £25,000 per institution) to counter “religiously based hate crime” (12 percent of total recorded hate crimes) with the £2.4 million handed out over three years to all other faith institutions. That is equivalent to less than £500 for each Muslim institution, even though 52 percent of hate crimes are directed at Muslims. Religious hate crimes rose by 40 percent, from 5,949 in 2016-17 to 8,336 in 2017-18, according to the Home Office.

More than 350 leading Islamic figures from countries including the UK, US and South Africa have signed a letter to the *Guardian*, which links Tarrant’s actions to an atmosphere of “systemic and institutionalised Islamophobia.”

The letter says: “This bigotry has been fuelled by certain callous academics, reckless politicians as well as

media outlets who regularly feature those who demonise Islam and Muslims with impunity, disguising their vile mantra behind a veneer of objectivity.

“The massacre of Muslims did not just begin with bullets fired from the barrel of Tarrant’s gun. Rather it was decades in the making: inspired by Islamophobic media reports, hundreds and thousands of column inches of hatred printed in the press, many Muslim-hating politicians and unchecked social media bigotry.”

Conservative peer Sayeeda Warsi, a Muslim, felt obliged to call on the government to counter Islamophobia, saying it was the party’s “bigotry blind spot.” Last July, she called for a “full independent inquiry,” saying, “I’ve been warning my party of its ‘Muslim problem’ for far too long.” She had repeatedly raised the issue over the past three years—including writing to Theresa May—but “absolutely nothing tangible has happened”.

“I don’t really believe we have that big a problem,” one former minister told the *Guardian*. Conservative Party chairman Brandon Lewis accused Warsi of “missing out on key facts” about the party’s “clear process” and “swift action.”

His comments are shown up for the lies they are by the fact that this month saw 25 Conservative members suspended pending investigations that they made Islamophobic statements on social media. One made the comment, “I was going through a few magazines the other day down at the local Mosque. I was really enjoying myself. Then the rifle jammed.”

Last month, 14 Conservative members of the Facebook group, "Jacob Rees-Mogg: Supporters' Group," were suspended for Islamophobic and racist comments, including demands to “send them home now.”

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