



Police rule out hate crime in arson attack on Imam's home

Description

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Greater Manchester, arson attack

Bolton Imam Hassan Patel has released CCTV footage of a masked arsonist setting fire to his family home in a shocking arson attack. Greater Manchester Police (GMP) [are reportedly not treating](#) the incident as a hate crime.

However, local Labour MP Yasmin Qureshi called out the clear Islamophobia at play. Likewise, Green leader Zack Polanski highlighted PM Keir Starmer's silence on the incident, sharply contrasting the response to recent similar crimes.

A 'serious and callous' arson attempt

Reports state that the arson attack [took place in broad daylight](#) on the evening of Wednesday 10 June. The target, a house on Eastgrove Avenue, was home to Patel, his wife, their four children and one nephew.

CCTV footage shows a figure dressed in black, wearing a motorcycle helmet, approaching the family home. The footage clearly captures the arson attack with the arsonist first setting down a rag near the doorway, which they soak with accelerant and set alight. After smashing a window, the arsonist sprayed more accelerant into the house and across the flaming rag.

Patel's son, Umair Yusuf, [first noticed the fire](#). The family used a hosepipe and water buckets to fight the flames, successfully extinguishing them before the fire service arrived. Greater Manchester Police received reports of the attack at 9:20pm that same evening.

Thankfully, none of the family sustained serious injuries. Imam Patel, who works as the principal for Islamic Education at the Taiyabah Masjid, issued a statement in the wake of the attack. He [described](#)

his family's shock

We as a family are devastated by the serious and callous arson attack that targeted our home. It was daylight at the time. This was clearly a dangerous and deliberate act that put our lives at risk. [?]

The family is horrified as to why we were targeted. We are grateful that no one was seriously injured, and we wish to thank the emergency services for their swift response in bringing the incident under control.

A targeted arson attack

A spokesperson for GMP said

We understand this incident may cause concern within the community; we are working to find those responsible and bring them to justice.

We believe this was a targeted attack, and a risk to the wider public. Officers will be providing reassurance with visits in the community over the next few days.

However, Patel stated his understanding that the police are not currently treating the incident as a hate crime. The debate over whether this act of arson classifies a hate crime. Given that GMP acknowledged a belief that the attack against the Imam's house was targeted, the officers' line of reasoning has proven difficult to swallow for some.

As such, Bolton Council of Mosques issued a statement stressing that the attack:

deserves a full and thorough investigation and should not be de-scaled as an isolated incident.

We deserve the same respect

Likewise, Imam Patel added his perception of GMP as downplaying the attack:

given the circumstances and the impact this attack has had on us, we believe it is essential that all possible motives are thoroughly examined and that no line of inquiry is ruled out prematurely, as it seems GMP has done at present.

We feel this is a very serious issue and is not being dealt with in the same manner that other incidents of a similar nature have. We are no different and deserve the same respect. This attack has left our family feeling shocked and unsafe in our own home. No individual or family should have to experience such fear and uncertainty.

On a similar note, Yasmin Qureshi [Labour MP for Bolton South and Walkden](#) said:

Thankfully, no one was hurt. But I know the fear doesn't end there. I know there are families this week who feel anxious walking their own streets and taking their children to mosque. To them I want to say clearly: you are not alone, and this whole town stands with you.

Qureshi added that, when an Imam's home is targeted:

our Muslim neighbours hear the message that's intended and so do I. Islamophobia has no place in Bolton. None. Our Muslim community is part of the fabric of this town, and an attack on them is an attack on all of us.

Others seem to be met with silence

Back in March, following an arson attack that caused £30,000 in damage to Stockport's Elaf mosque, the [Muslim Social Justice Initiative](#) noted the police repeatedly refused to classify attacks including arson on mosques in the Greater Manchester area as racially motivated. Four other attacks targeted the same mosque in the past year.

Beyond the reaction from Greater Manchester Police, it's also notable that the incident has received relatively little media-political attention. Green leader [Zack Polanski highlighted that](#)

it's pretty disgraceful that there has been absolutely no mention of this from the Prime Minister.

It's increasingly clear that some attacks, correctly, warrant disgust, emergency measures and days of media coverage.

Others seem to be met with silence.

[When masked arsonists](#) carried out an attack against four ambulances owned by Jewish community service Hatzola back in March, the Met Police declared the attack as an [antisemitic hate crime](#) within three hours. Likewise, the incident received widespread media coverage and [condemnation from the government](#)

As Polanski stressed, that disgust towards attacks like Golders Green was well-warranted. However, those same politicians have stayed silent in the face of an arson attack against an Imam's home.

And, [as racist riots](#) have swept the country in recent weeks, it remains clear that the hierarchy of racism remains alive and well in the UK's political consciousness.

Featured image [via X / the Canary](#)

By [Alex/Rose Cocker](#)

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