

# Islamophobia: Four Years after Finsbury Park Attack, Canada Deaths Show Threat Undiminished

Muslims around the world will never be safe until the issue of Islamophobia is taken seriously and tackled head-on

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*Four years ago this weekend, I received a phone call. The panicked voice at the end of the line told me a terror attack had taken place.*

Someone had [rammed their van into worshippers](#) as they left night prayers at Finsbury Park Mosque in north London, and one of the worshippers had been killed.

This was our mosque, our community hub, our space of solace, and my workplace. Now our sense of serenity had been shattered by an act of hate.

The days that followed saw a flurry of activity and chaos. The world’s media camped outside our mosque. Security was heightened, official visits took place, and promises of change were made.

Four years on, we are still waiting for those promises to be fulfilled.

The politicians and media may have moved on, but our community has not. **Makram Ali**, who was mowed down in the attack, is still dead.

His children are still without a father, and those who knew him and prayed beside him still live in fear that an attack like this could take place again and that their names will be the ones written in obituaries.

Our mosque has received endless calls from Muslim women in the area worried about being the victims of hate crimes and we have had to put on workshops and therapy sessions to help with the trauma people are experiencing.

Our lives as a community were changed forever on 19 June 2017, and we are still feeling the effect of that attack today.

**Dark smog**

It is why I was pained and horrified to see [such a similar attack](#) take place in Canada earlier this month where four members of the same family in London, Ontario, were killed because they were Muslim.

Reading about this incident gave me flashbacks to what took place outside our mosque and the unimaginable terror and horror unleashed that day.

Though these attacks took place hundreds of miles apart, the source of this hatred is the same: Islamophobia.

Islamophobia is the dark smog we have allowed to descend on our societies. What was once exclusively the rhetoric of the far right on the fringes of society has now infiltrated the mainstream and has become the acceptable face of racism.

The Islamophobic attacks that took place in Finsbury Park, Ontario, and Christchurch, to name a few, did not arise in a vacuum.

They are the culmination of decades of institutional Islamophobic discourse and racialised policies that have filtered down from the top to our streets.

Islamophobia is not simply surviving, it is thriving, and we put Muslims at risk when we fail to acknowledge the pattern of hate locally and across borders.

Here in the UK, we have a political class that still refuses to acknowledge Islamophobia and take it seriously, and a media that is complicit in spreading negative coverage of Muslims and demonising them.

## **Global inaction**

From London to Jerusalem, from Christchurch to Oslo, the impact of Islamophobia is clear for everyone to see, yet the response to its rise globally has been met with inaction, silence, and in some cases, celebration.

Following the attacks in London, Ontario, the Canadian **Prime Minister Justin Trudeau** declared that Islamophobia has no place in our communities. But despite this, Ontario's government blocked a motion condemning Islamophobia.

Similarly, leaders of the Conservative Party here in the UK reneged on their promise to carry out [a truly independent inquiry](#) on Islamophobia in the party, and our prime minister still refuses to apologise for several Islamophobic comments he has made.

Let us be clear: Muslims will never be safe from another attack until the issue of Islamophobia is taken seriously and tackled head-on.

For us at Finsbury Park Mosque and for many Muslims across the world, another Islamophobic attack taking place is not a case of if, but when.

Though these attacks are intended to cause terror and fear, they also draw out the best in people.

From the courage of Imam Mohammed, who protected the attacker from the anger of those he had nearly just killed, to those who sent flowers and cards from across the world to our

mosque and Makram's family, to the hundreds from our local community and beyond that gathered outside our mosque the day after the attack to show their solidarity.

Christchurch and London, Ontario, have their heroes and well-wishers too, and what these acts of solidarity show are that those who tried to divide us have failed.

I hope other communities around the world do not have to experience what we did in order to come together to fight the scourge of Islamophobia and I hope that governments around the world reflect the actions of their citizens who are calling out in one voice against this evil.

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**Mohamed Kozbar** is a community leader and chairman of the Finsbury Park mosque in North London.

*Featured image: Darren Osborne was jailed for life for the attack in 2017 that killed Makram Ali, who was walking home from night prayers (Supplied to Middle East Eye)*

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