

Man racially assaulted Muslims and attempted to set fire to Tooting mosque



A man with mental health problems racially assaulted Muslim worshippers and attempted to set fire to a mosque, a magistrates court heard.

Damian Royston Smith, 30, of Lambourne Gardens, Essex, harassed worshippers at the Tooting Islamic Centre, in Upper Tooting Road, over five days.

Wimbledon Magistrates Court heard Smith converted to Islam seven years ago but lost contact with the Imam Suliman Gani.

On November 15 last year Iftikhar Hussain, a volunteer security worker at the mosque, said he saw Smith watching children going to evening classes.

Mr Hussain asked him to leave, but he began shouting racist abuse outside the prayer room and the mosque.

He went on to charge into the mosque doors with a whisky bottle.

The next day Smith barged Vase Siddiqi and shouted racist abuse at him outside the mosque, but Mr Siddiqi was told the imam was dealing with the situation.

Later on in the day he saw him lying down outside the mosque and decided to report the assault to the police.

Two days afterwards two policemen arrested Smith for trying to set fire to the mosque with a plastic bag filled with tomato tin cans and matches.

He said he had been sleeping rough for the past few days and wanted to be arrested so he had somewhere to sleep.

Prosecuting, Mrs Trudy Scott said: "It all happened in a short space of time because he was having issues with the mosque.

"The imam said he had converted to Islam seven years ago and lost contact, he had lost his mother and was going through a difficult time."

British Bangladeshi Power 100 Launched



Abdal Ullah (Founder), Ayesha Qureshi MBE (Editor) and Nobab Uddin (Chief Advisor) together with their advisory committee announced the names in the first ever British Bangladeshi Power 100 at a press conference held at Portcullis House, Westminster on Tuesday 24th January 2012.

The British Bangladeshi Power 100 represents leading figures who through their ideas, example, talent, and success are influencing the British Bangladeshi community and Britain today.

The BBPower100 is divided into ten categories covering, Entrepreneur and Business

Brand; Politics and Policy; Education, Culture and Sports; Catering Industry; Media; Community and Voluntary organisations; Women; Professions; Religious and Community figures; and Emerging Influence.

The full list of BBPower100 names can be viewed at www.bbpower100.com and will be printed in the flowing publications from this week: Jonomot, Surma, Potrika, Muslim Weekly, Weekly Bangladesh, Bangla Times, Notun Din, London Bangla, East London News, Bangla Post.

Special guests at the reception

included: Rushanara Ali MP (Member of Parliament for Bethnal Green and Bow) – Shadow Minister for International Development; and

Anne Main MP (Member of Parliament for St Albans) – Chairman of the Britain-Bangladesh All-Party Parliamentary Group.

Abdal Ullah and Ayesha Qureshi said: "Compiling the 2012 BBPower100 has been a journey of discovery; we believe that BBPower100 has identified members of the British Bangladeshi community who have not been highlighted before alongside the more established names. This could have been a list of a thousand, in every category the advisory committee debated more names than he had spaces for. We are inspired by the British Bangladeshi contribution across all aspects of society from sports to Science, from architecture to the army, from entrepreneurship to emerging figures, there is much to be proud of and to celebrate."

Nobab Uddin said: "I have seen, heard and written many stories about the British Bangladeshi community in my 20 years as a journalist, but this process has shown me that there are still many inspiring stories to tell. It has been a pleasure to have had the opportunity to participate in such a groundbreaking project and identify the crème de la crème of the British Bangladeshi community."

Sunbury-on-Thames schoolgirl race attack

A race attack in Surrey on an 11-year-old girl will be the focus of community talks in Sunbury-on-Thames.

The girl was attacked by older white girls who kicked her, pushed her to the ground and drew on her face.

Surrey Police said it seemed the girl had been targeted on 11 January because she was wearing a headscarf.

Spelthorne councillor Colin Strong said the incident was being raised at a meeting with neighbourhood police as an issue that affected the community.

Detectives said they were treating the incident in Vicarage Road as a racially-aggravated assault.

Det Con Simon Egan said the girl had been targeted as she waited for a bus.

He said the suspects had kicked the victim in the leg, pulled her rucksack from her, pushed her to the floor, used make-up to draw on her face and racially abused her.

After the incident, the girl picked up her bag and ran away.

Det Con Egan said: "This was an appalling assault where a young victim has been targeted in a completely unprovoked attack.

Ministers oppose extra benefits for multiple wives

Ministers will bring to an end an "absurd" benefits regime that benefits husbands with multiple wives with extra welfare payments.

Although bigamy is illegal in Britain, men who are married to more than one woman in countries where the practice was legal and then brought them to the UK have been allowed for years to receive multiple benefits.

Critics claimed the controversial system meant the state is effectively "recognising" polygamous marriages, of which there are thought to be only a thousand in the UK.

The practice is largely confined to Muslim men, who are permitted under some interpretations of Islamic law to have up to four wives – as long as they spend equal amounts of time and money on each partner.

The system of paying extra benefits for multiple wives was reviewed under Labour in an exercise involving four separate Whitehall branches – The Treasury, the Department for Work & Pensions, HM Revenue & Customs and the Home Office.

The review concluded that



recognising multiple marriages which had taken place overseas in the benefits system was the "best possible option" and official guidelines on income support were amended early in 2008.

At the time they stated: "Where there is a valid polygamous marriage the claimant and one spouse will be paid the couple rate ... The amount payable for each additional spouse is presently £33.65."

This has subsequently been increased to £38.45 a week for second and subsequent spouses, while the husband and his first wife are paid the ordinary couple rate of £105.95.

Now, however, the coalition is to change the rules so that multiple benefits can no longer be paid.

Under the new system of Universal Credit, which will replace all mean-tested benefits from next year, polygamous

marriages will not be recognised at all.

Instead, a husband and one wife will claim as a couple – with any other adults living in the household claiming as single people.

Chris Grayling, the Employment Minister, said: "We currently have an absurd situation where polygamous marriages are outlawed in the UK but recognised in the benefits system because of a loophole."

Under the 1988 Immigration Act, a man was "generally" banned from bringing a "second or subsequent wife" into Britain "if another woman is already living as his wife in the UK".

However, even though it was impossible for a married man to obtain a spouse visa for a second wife, some used other means of getting extra partners in including work permits, student visas and even tourist visas.

Britain only officially recognises Muslim couples as "married" if they undergo a register office wedding as well as a Nikah, or religious ceremony.

According to Muslim groups, it is common for men here to undergo more than one Nikah with different wives. This is not counted as bigamy and only the first marriage has legal recognition.

In Britain, bigamy is punishable by up to seven years in prison.