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Anti-Muslim hate crimes increase fivefold since London Bridge attacks

The London Bridge attacks have triggered a big spike in hate crimes with a significant amount of them being attacks in the street directed at British Muslims.

By Vikram Dodd and Sarah Marsh

The Guardian (07.06.2017) - <http://bit.ly/2s6BvHS> - Figures released by the mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, showed a fivefold increase in Islamophobic attacks since the atrocity at London Bridge on Saturday, and a 40% increase in racist incidents, compared with the daily average this year.

The increase in recorded Islamophobic incidents after the London Bridge attack is greater than it was after the 2013 murder of Lee Rigby and after the 2015 massacre in Paris, two different sets of figures have suggested.

The nature of this rise in hate crime is also different from last year after the Brexit vote, police sources have told the Guardian. Recorded hate crime rose to 54 incidents a day versus a daily average of 38 for 2017, Metropolitan police figures covering London have shown. Recorded crime where an anti-Muslim motive was identified reached 20, while the daily average for 2017 was under four.

The trends are confirmed by figures from Tell Mama, an independent group, which recorded 66 incidents from Sunday to Tuesday reported to it rather than the police. The figures are indicative; there is believed by police and community experts to be huge under-reporting of hate crimes.

Tell Mama said it recorded 141 hate crime incidents after the Manchester attack on 22 May, a rise of 500% compared with a daily average of 25. Then, in the week after, incidents dropped to 37 and after the London Bridge attack on Saturday they have risen sharply to 63 so far. If they continue at the current level they will exceed the figures for after the attack on Manchester.

Khan said: "I'm calling on all Londoners to pull together and send a clear message around the world that our city will never be divided by these hideous individuals who seek to harm us and destroy our way of life."

Fiyaz Mughal, the director of Tell Mama, said: "The spike of anti-Muslim hate cases that we have picked up in the three days following the London attack where 63 incidents have been reported to Tell Mama, show a substantial number of street level incidents (and online), when compared with a normal three-day period in early May where [there would be] 10 reports. The type of incidents reported range from assaults, threats, physical violence and online hatred."

Furhaan Altaf, 26, told how his brother was verbally abused. He was then attacked by two or three grown men, suffering three fractures to his face. "He was verbally and racially abused and then physically assaulted," Altaf said. "My brother is very shaken up."

Sufia Alam, the manager of the Maryam Centre at the East London Mosque, said it had had reports of Muslim women being verbally abused on buses. Ash Siddique, secretary of the Al-Madina Mosque in Barking, east London, said women coming to the mosque suffered attacks, including one being grabbed around the throat at a bus stop. "We've had a number of ladies who have been verbally abused and a number of ladies who have been spat on. We've had a couple of telephone calls, physical threats - 'we are going to attack you' - and that sort of thing," said Siddique.

The three London Bridge terrorists were living in the east London area at the time of the atrocity.

The Sutton Islamic centre in south London suffered a graffiti attack that read: "terrorise your own country".

Last year there was a rise in hate crimes after the UK voted to leave the EU following a campaign in which immigration was a heated issue. The rise now has different features, one police source told the Guardian. After the Brexit vote, hate crime against east Europeans increased and visible ethnic minorities, while after the atrocities in Manchester and London, the attacks are directed just against those perceived by bigots to be Muslims, numerically a smaller group than those bearing the brunt last summer.

The National Police Chiefs Council lead for hate crime, Assistant Chief Constable Mark Hamilton, said: "We know that terrorist attacks and other national and global events have the potential to trigger short-term spikes in the recording of hate crime. Following the attacks in Manchester and London, both police forces registered spikes in hate crime.

"It is more important than ever that we stand together in the face of hostility. We may see spikes in intolerance and hate but we are also seeing communities around the country come together as we refuse to be divided by fear."