

Life in London after the bombings



IT was 9/11 for England. Two events where a Londoners' need for public transport was exploited. The famous London double-decker and especially the London underground, on two separate days, the targets of megalomaniacal delusional psychos.

That however is an issue that has already been discussed in the main line newspapers.

But how has life changed for the average Londoner, especially the Indian subcontinent Muslim?

For one thing, the subway is doing very bad business. Many commuters have dropped taking the underground and now prefer taxis or buses. Street traffic has increased by a dramatic amount. Despite that people still go to work or

school just as usual they just take a different route. In a show of their quintessential British reserve, life has slowed down to the hum-drum of everyday routine.

As a fourth year since the American disaster comes around, it is a thought in many people's mind that how are our "Muslim brothers and sisters" dealing with it?

This is the twenty-first century, there are no lynch mobs and no burnings. So no, east enders are not being chased down the streets with torches and pitch forks. Most people who have lived in London long enough are quite indifferent. They have long become used to the glares, cold looks, rude tones and occasional malicious remarks that started way before the bombings. Now people just have a new excuse to keep at it.

Who are these people? They are none other than an isolated few, who, ironically, are just the same as the people they hate so much. They are very few in number, passionate about their revulsion, ignorant, uneducated, fanatical and with just as big an ego as the so called jihadis—the self-proclaimed holy warriors that they so despise.

So as one group of ignorant try to prove a point over the other, life goes on for those who value it. People are more cautious now. They think twice before taking public transport, or helping someone in trouble or picking up an abandoned bag. Muslims hesitate before reveal-

ing their faith, cops mercilessly shoot innocent people, and misunderstanding grows. Terrorists have achieved exactly what they wanted to. Although for those whose concerns go beyond making misery for others, they are nothing but the slightest obstacles to a fulfilling life.

I will admit that I have been putting off this article for a long time. With the topic in mind however, I am not to blame. The subject material was hard enough to find. There aren't testimonials of harassed Muslims pasted all over the media, which was what I initially thought the topic was asking for.

It would be in my opinion, not only politically incorrect, but of poor taste to give narratives of the shocking treatment received by some. Yes, it happens, but it is not so common as some people would (like to, in some cases) think. There are "random checks" in airports. Some punk will string together swear words with *Moslem* and *Paki* and phrases like 'go back' typically included in them. Shopkeepers will be rude, fellow passengers will glare and shy away. But not to put some in the above sentences makes me what so many of us fear so much, a racist.

On an ending note, anyone who has the slightest sense knows not to let these unfortunate events affect them, and they know whose actions are worth paying attention to, and more importantly, whose are not.

By Grim Reaper

7/7: The aftermath & some reflections

MAN'S penchant for labelling is a well known phenomenon that many don't find themselves agreeing with. However there are certain times when even that becomes justified and we find ourselves with labelled dates stamped-marked into the memory of not one individual but all the six billion people across the globe. After all, who doesn't know about 9/11 a date that has become synonymous with terrorism, everywhere and anywhere. For many it is almost a day of reckoning when innocent people were brutally murdered. For others maybe it was a day of great victory. Anyways, whatever may have been the case, the term 9/11 had almost taken on a mythic quantity in our minds. Something of a far off warning which stated that anything and everything that you work for and know could dissolve in a single day. There will be few days with greater magnitude than 9/11 but the events that transpired three years, nine months and 26 days since 9/11, would doubtless run it close.

Add the numbers and the date that you reach would be 7/7 and now you would know what I am talking about here. Aside the amusing matching quality of the date there was nothing at all to smile about on the day when the world stood and watched as London exploded in a series of blasts. The timing of the bombings were for want of a better word ingenious.

The bombings came while the UK was hosting the first full day of the 31st G8 summit, a day after London was chosen to host the 2012 Summer Olympics, two days after the beginning of the trial of fundamentalist cleric Abu Hamza, five days after the Live 8 concert was held there, and shortly after Britain had assumed the rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union. Therefore the plethora of emotions on display was understandable and the scenes of despair a far cry from not twenty-four hours before when Londoners celebrated late into the night upon being chosen as hosts.

Fifty-six people were killed in the attacks, including the four suspected bombers, with 700 injured. The incident was the deadliest single act of terrorism in the United Kingdom since the 1988 bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 (which killed 270), and the deadliest bombing in London since the Second World War.

Police investigators identified four men whom they believed to be suicide bombers. These were the first suicide bombings in West-

ern Europe, and are thought to have been planned by Islamist paramilitary organisations based in the United Kingdom; the terrorist organization al-Qaeda claimed responsibility.

The repercussions were understandably large. And the fact that three of the four alleged bombers Hasib Hussain, Mohammad Sidique Khan & Shehzad Tanweer were young dark skinned Asians aside from being Muslim was a fact of some concern for the gigantic South Asian community in London and the rest of UK. Thankfully however the backlash was not as severe as it was feared to have been. There have been scenes of animosity but on a whole those

all but he is quick to relate that this is probably because most of the people who live there are from South Asia. However, he is wary. He thinks that if he went to a place in the UK where there were a majority of white people he would have abuse directed at him. Naveed also works at the Chelsea football club in London and he says that he feels many of the fans there look down on coloured people, more so since the bombings. "I would probably have had more remarks thrown at me had it not been for the really strict racist laws in Britain."

Naveed and his friend Hashim Zaheer both study at SOAS and many of their school build-

ings became target of sorts. It made me more wary as to whether I should wear a large rucksack for university or whether or not I should run if late for a train...because now you may run the risk of getting shot if you do that!" These little things are mainly what's affecting Hashim because he feels that in order to adjust these things he needs a lot of effort because running to catch a train when late is almost something ingrained in the human system.

Hashim and Naveed both condemn those who attacked London but also condemn those who are in their words, "looking for scapegoats and are just going gung-ho."

"Britain is a tolerant and vibrant society. We should continue to maintain this. The question is... is it possible in this existing climate of fear?" relates a reflective Hashim.

"We must all calm down and not take neither the extremist fundamentalist extreme nor the Hardcore Right Western Secular extreme," relates both Ahmed and Zaheer. Some may call it living in the grey, but as far as the young South Asians are concerned, that is all that they can do for now.

However having people like Tom Cahill and Heather Collins would undoubtedly help.

"It has always been inevitable that London would be the victim of a terrorist attack, however I think it is absolutely appalling how the Asian population have become the centre of racism attacks. The media has a huge impact on the views of people, as is evident by how the Asian population are now suffering. I believe that we should be proud to live in a multicultural society and that we should stop punishing the Asian community because of a handful of people. I don't deny that what happened on 7/7 was a tragic event, however I do believe that we should come together as a nation regardless of culture or faith to fight the terrible act of terrorism," says Heather.

Tom sums it up for us however. "Amidst the global outcry against continued terrorist attacks, there seems to me to be one voice always missing. Where is the singular, leading representative of peaceful Islam and why is he not centre-stage, standing strong against the likes of bin Laden, al-Zawahiri, and al-Zarqawi? The world needs a face with which to associate true Islam -- and not just the menacing images of those who have 'hijacked' their religion."

By Quazi Zulqarnain Islam



are isolated incidents.

Like the time when one Shehzad Malik, a Muslim of Pakistani descent got a phone call from a gently spoken woman at work who after a short conversation asked him his name.

He got about half way through S... H... E..., when she interrupted him saying, "No need to spell it I know that name..." "no need to spell it— it's the same name as one of the bombers."

There you had it. Blatantly out in the open. But thankfully incidents like that are few and far between.

Naveed Ahmad, a Bangladeshi, who lives in St. Albans and goes to school in SOAS says that life, at least in St. Albans has not changed at

ings are located in Russell Square and they both frequent the Russell Square station and the Kings Cross station. Thankfully both were home for the holidays when the bombs ripped apart the stations. It does not however, in any way, lessen the impact for either.

Hashim has this to relate, "Firstly I love London and like all British citizens I found it an utter shock and disbelief when it happened." He understood from then on that the lives of most would change especially when an innocent Brazilian was shot dead. This was shot to kill and as bad as anything that the London people had ever experienced.

Hashim continues, "All brown skinned