

**VAN ATTACK ON LONDON MUSLIMS**



**A police officer helps a woman leave flowers near the scene of an attack where a van was driven at Muslims outside a mosque in Finsbury Park in North London, Britain, yesterday. Inset, a police officer detains a man near the scene of the attack.** PHOTO: REUTERS



**Imam protects van driver from public**

**INdependent.co.uk**  
An imam reportedly saved the van driver involved in the suspected Finsbury Park terrorist attack from being attacked by members of the public in the immediate aftermath of the crash. Witnesses reported those nearby grabbed and pinned the driver down until police arrived. One said the furious crowd might have injured or killed him were it not for the intervention of imam Mohammed Mahmoud. An eyewitness who gave his name as Abdul told The Independent: "People gather on that part of the street during Ramadan to chat and socialise so it was premeditated. He knew what he was doing. "He waited until people had come out then drove at the people on the right then swerved to hit people on the left. Someone was lying under his van shouting 'Help me'. "He tried to run away but we brought him down. He would've died because so many people were punching him but the imam came out and said 'No more punching, let's keep him down until the police come'. Witnesses also claimed a man shouted "I'm going to kill all Muslims" after a van ploughed into people near the area's mosque. The man, who wanted to be identified as Abdulrahman, which is not his real name, said he and his friends had stopped to help an elderly man who was lying on the floor around 12:20am yesterday. "In seconds this terrible thing happened," he said. The van driver, described by witnesses as a large white man, was detained by members of the public after the attack in Seven Sisters Road.

**Attack on shared values**  
*Says Mayor Sadiq Khan; May announces review of security at mosques across UK*

**Agencies**  
London Mayor Sadiq Khan said an incident in which a man drove a van into worshippers near a London mosque killing one person and injuring 10 was an attack on common values. "Like the terrible attacks in Manchester, Westminster and London Bridge it is also an assault on all our shared values of tolerance, freedom and respect," he said in a statement. Khan said there would be extra police to reassure communities, especially those observing Ramadan. Suspect appeared to blow a kiss at onlookers after being put in a police van following the incident. Mobile phone footage taken by one of those who crowded round the police van seems to show the arrested 48-year-old man blowing a kiss at the person recording the video, reported The Independent. Other witnesses claimed the suspect was laughing after the attack. A man who wanted to be identified as Abdulrahman, which is not his real name,

said he helped detain the suspect and added: "When he went into the [police] van he made gestures, he was laughing." Witness Abdul Rashid, 18, told The Independent that in the immediate aftermath of the incident, the suspect appeared calm and detached. "He wasn't distressed, not in the slightest," said Rashid. "Everyone was shouting but he was completely desensitized. He looked blank." Muslim Council of Britain secretary general Harun Khan condemned the attack and also urged calm. Security at mosques across the UK will be reviewed in the wake of the Finsbury Park terror attack, the Prime Minister said yesterday. "Extra police resources have already been deployed to reassure communities, and the police will continue to assess the security needs of mosques, and provide any additional resources needed, especially during this final week before Eid al-Fitr, a particularly important time for the whole Muslim community," Theresa May said in Downing Street.



**EU kicks off formal Brexit process**

*Britain says will be 'positive and constructive' in talks*

**Afp, Brussels**  
Britain and the European Union began their first formal Brexit negotiations yesterday, under pressure to seal a deal amid disarray in London over whether to go for a hard or soft divorce. At stake is not just Britain's future but also Europe's post-war political order and its place in the world which could be fatally undermined without an agreement by the March 2019 deadline. The EU's chief negotiator, France's Michel Barnier, welcomed his counterpart David Davis with a handshake and smiles for the press in the European Commission's landmark headquarters in central Brussels flanked by the EU and British flags. "Today we are launching negotiations on the orderly withdrawal of the UK from the EU," said Barnier, a former European commissioner and French foreign minister. Their first task must be to "tackle the uncertainties caused by Brexit," he said, citing the rights of EU citizens in Britain and the possible impact on the open border between Northern Ireland and the republic. "I hope that today we can identify priorities and a timetable to allow me to report to (EU leaders) later this week (that) we had a constructive opening of negotiations." Davis, a prominent tough-talking figure in the "Leave" campaign, sounded a positive note too, saying "there is

**FIRST TASK MUST BE TO TACKLE UNCERTAINTIES CAUSED BY BREXIT: EU'S CHIEF NEGOTIATOR**



more that unites us than divides us." "In testing times like these we are reminded of the values and resolve we share with our closest allies in Europe," he said, referring to the latest reported terror attack overnight in London and the loss of lives in forest fires in Portugal. Davis said the talks would be carried out in "a positive and constructive tone," with Britain looking to forge a "strong and special partnership for the future." Last year's Brexit vote came as a profound shock to Brussels against a backdrop of rising anti-EU sentiment, with many -- including now US President Donald Trump -- predicting the bloc's eventual break-up. May officially triggered the two-year Brexit process in March when she was riding high in the opinion polls. She then announced -- despite having ruled it out repeatedly -- that she would seek a fresh mandate to give her the authority to push through a Brexit deal, or even walk away without one if need be. But instead she lost her parliamentary majority, putting that hard-line approach and her political future in doubt after the disastrous June 8 election.

**Cordon in Paris after car hits police van**

**INdependent.co.uk**  
French police have evacuated the Champs-Elysees in Paris over an incident in which a suspected attacker rammed his car into a police van yesterday. Paris officials said a suspected attacker had been "downed" after he or she drove a car into a police vehicle on the street, which is a popular tourist destination. The French national gendarmerie service says the driver of a car that rammed a law enforcement vehicle has been arrested and no one was hurt in the incident. "It appears to have been a deliberate act on the part of the individual," said Interior Ministry spokesman Pierre-Henry Brandet. Witnesses described seeing a car on fire as police cleared the streets, and reporters at the scene described a man wearing a white shirt and dark shorts lying on the ground on his stomach. Police said a security operation was under way and witnesses said a cordon was being extended across the shopping district down to the Place de la Concorde. Official social media profiles urged people to avoid the area. A report on France's BFM TV said the man was known to security services and had been carrying a gas bottle in the car. The nearest Metro station to the incident, Champs-Elysees Clémenceau, was closed. Book-ended by the iconic Arc de Triomphe to the northwest and the seat of French government to the southeast, the Champs-Elysees is popular with tourists. An attacker pledging allegiance to the Isis jihadist group shot and killed a police officer on the Champs-Elysees in April, days before the presidential election, prompting an extensive security operation. France remains under a state of emergency after a string of deadly Islamist extremist attacks.

**NEWS IN brief**

**79 presumed dead in London fire: police**  
**Afp, London**  
Seventy-nine people are dead or missing and presumed dead following a devastating blaze in a London tower block, police said yesterday, as Britain held a minute's silence for the victims. Police had earlier put the toll from Wednesday's inferno at 58.  
**Qatar's isolation could last 'years': UAE**  
**Afp, Paris**  
Qatar's diplomatic isolation could last years and its Gulf rivals will not lift sanctions until it abandons its alleged support for jihadists, a United Arab Emirates minister said yesterday. "We want to isolate," Anwar Gargash told journalists during a visit to Paris.

**US downs Syria warplane**  
*Regime disputes account; Russia condemns*

**Afp, Beirut**  
Russia yesterday warned it would track US-led coalition aircraft in central Syria as "targets" and halted an incident-prevention hotline with Washington after US forces downed a Syrian jet. Moscow has only once before suspended the hotline, which was established in October 2015 to prevent conflict between the different forces operating in Syrian airspace. The shootdown incident and Russia's response further complicate Syria's six-year war and come as the US-led coalition and allied fighters battle to oust the Islamic State group from its Syrian bastion Raqa. Russia's foreign ministry accused Washington of failing to use the hotline before downing the plane near Raqa, and called for a "careful investigation by the US command" into the incident. "Any flying objects, including planes and drones of the international coalition, discovered west of the Euphrates river will

be tracked as aerial targets by Russia's air defences on and above ground," it warned. The Syrian jet was shot down on Sunday evening after regime forces engaged fighters from the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). The American F/A-18E Super Hornet shot down the Syrian SU-22 around 7:00 pm as it "dropped bombs near SDF fighters" south of the town of Tabqa. Syria's army disputed the account, saying its plane was hit while "conducting a mission against the terrorist Islamic State group." It warned of "the grave consequences of this flagrant aggression". Iran has targeted jihadists in Syria with missiles in retaliation for deadly attacks in Tehran, but the strike was also a message to its regional rivals and Washington, experts say. Late Sunday, the elite Revolutionary Guards launched six missiles from western Iran into Syria's mostly Islamic State group-held Deir Ezzor province, hitting an IS command base, the Guards said.

**MOSCOW HALTS HOTLINE WITH US**  
**IRAN LAUNCHES MISSILES AT IS POSITIONS**



**Debris and fire is seen after an OV-10 Bronco aircraft released a bomb, during an airstrike, as government forces continue their assault against IS militants, who have taken over large parts of Marawi City, Philippines, yesterday.** PHOTO: REUTERS

**Portugal weeps as forest fire still rages**

**Afp, Pedrogão Grande**  
More than 1,000 firefighters yesterday continued to battle a giant forest fire that swept through central Portugal at the weekend, killing at least 62 people. The country was in mourning after the deadliest such disaster in its recent history.

**Free flights for baby born mid-air**

**Afp, Mumbai**  
An Indian woman gave birth to a baby boy on an international commercial flight as it flew at 35,000 feet, the airline said yesterday. The unnamed woman, in her 20s, went into premature labour on Sunday's Jet Airways flight between Damman in Saudi Arabia and Kochi in the southern Indian state of Kerala. "The guest delivered a baby boy at 35,000 feet," Jet Airways said in a statement, adding that a paramedic on board and airline staff helped with the delivery. The Boeing 737 flight, which had 162 passengers on board, was diverted to Mumbai where the woman and her newborn were rushed to a hospital near the airport. An official at Mumbai's Holy Spirit hospital told AFP yesterday that both the mother and baby boy were doing well. The woman was believed to have been around 32 weeks pregnant when she gave birth. Jet Airways said it was the first time a baby had been born on one of its flights and that it had given him free travel for life on the airline. In August last year a woman gave birth on a flight from the United Arab Emirates to the Philippines.

**'Surrender or die'**  
*Iraq forces warn IS, urge civilians to stay inside*

**Afp, Mosul**  
Iraqi forces pushed deeper into Mosul's Old City yesterday after launching a final assault on the Islamic State group, warning civilians to stay inside and telling jihadists to "surrender or die". Iraqi forces launched the operation Sunday to retake the district, the last part of Iraq's second city still held by IS after a months-long offensive. Commanders say the jihadists are putting up fierce resistance and there are fears for more than 100,000 civilians believed to be trapped in the maze of narrow streets. Staff Major General Maan al-Saadi, a top commander in Iraq's elite Counter-Terrorism Service (CTS), told AFP that heavy fighting had resumed at dawn yesterday. "At 6:00 am, we pushed deeper into the Old City and took control of new areas in the Faruq neighbourhood," he said,

including with months of air strikes. The loss of Mosul would mark the effective end of the Iraqi portion of the cross-border "caliphate" IS declared in summer 2014 after seizing swathes of Iraq and Syria. "Daesh resistance has been fierce," he said, using an Arabic acronym for the jihadist group. "They have blocked every entrance, planted IEDs (improvised explosive devices) and booby trapped houses our forces might be near," he said. "Penetrating was very difficult. Today the fighting is face to face." The push into Mosul's historic heart on the west bank of the river Tigris marks the culmination of a months-long campaign by Iraqi forces to retake IS's last major urban stronghold in the country. The US-led coalition battling IS in Iraq and neighbouring Syria has backed the offensive



**MOSUL OFFENSIVE**

**FRENCH PARLIAMENTARY POLLS**  
**Record number of women elected**

**Reuters, Paris**  
France voted a record number of women into parliament, election results showed yesterday, after President Emmanuel Macron's victorious Republic on the Move (LREM) party fielded a gender-balanced candidate list. Of the 577 newly elected lawmakers, 223 were female, beating the previous record of 155 set after the last election. That sent France leapfrogging from 64th to 17th in the world rankings of female parliamentary representation and to 6th place in Europe, overtaking Britain and Germany, according to Inter-parliamentary Union data compiled at the start of June. LREM, which won an overwhelming majority in Sunday's ballot, had the highest proportion of women elected, at 47 percent. "For the first time under the (postwar) Fifth Republic, the National Assembly will be deeply renewed - more diverse, younger," the party's acting president, Catherine Barbaroux, said. "But above all, allow me to rejoice, because this is a historic event for the representation of women in the National Assembly." Female representation in the National Assembly has risen steadily, from 12.3 percent at the 2002 election to 38.6 percent this time.