

Statement by imam Jasmin Bekric, Mufti of the Bosniak Islamic Community in Australia and New Zealand, in relation to horrendous terrorist act against innocent Muslims of Christ Church

On behalf of the entire Bosnian Islamic community in Australia and New Zealand, as its mufti (religious community representative), I would like to express my deep condolences to families, friends and loved ones of all those innocent worshippers who were murdered in cold blood yesterday.

They were murdered indiscriminately during the Friday (Jum'a) prayer at the time when they were most defenseless while they devoted their prayers, their bodies and their souls to their Creator, the Almighty Allah (SWTA).

Our sympathy, our thoughts and our prayers go to all the Muslim community members of Christchurch, this tranquil city in New Zealand. As we are finding out perpetrator of this terrorist act was an Australian citizen and his accomplices, white supremacists, who did not show any remorse for their heinous acts of murder and who did not accept what they did was wrong and unacceptable.

It is simply impossible to find the right word to adequately describe the seriousness and gravity of this horrendous crime against defenseless innocent human beings - our fellow Muslims, whose only crime was because they profess the religion of Islam and who answered the call of Allah (SWTA) to offer their regular weekly prayers in their two mosques.

It is with a great sadness, dismay and utter disbelief that we are trying to comprehend the depth of evil that occurred yesterday. We are all appalled to learn of these murderous attacks on Masjid Al Noor and Linwood. We pray to God the Almighty that those who survived the massacre and were injured have fast recovery from their wounds. We cannot comprehend the loss their families suffered. We are with them in their sorrow and mourning. May Allah ease their pain and suffering.

We condemn this despicable act of terror against innocent people in strongest possible terms and our thoughts are with not only the Muslim community of Christchurch but the entire nation of New Zealand at large, as families of victims are going through pain and mourning while we here are struggling with our minds to try and comprehend why this horrendous terrorist murder had to happen in the first place and how was it possible.

This act of terrorism is directed not only against innocent Muslims but also against the most sacred rights of humanity and against principles of peace, freedom of worship, life, harmony and human dignity.

We call upon the authorities of New Zealand to bring perpetrators of this mass murder to justice and we have no hesitation to believe they will indeed feel full force of justice, as they must.

This terrorist attack only proves how we are all vulnerable as human beings and as communities. Mass murder on this scale has occurred in the most unlikely of places, in a peaceful and tranquil New Zealand, in a remote community of Christchurch. Given the number of victims perished, gravity of the situation, apparent planning of the murder, lack of remorse of perpetrators of crime and inability of authorities and security agencies to predict it, let alone stop it, raises more questions than we can find the answers.

Millions of dollars of taxpayer's money are being spent on counter terrorism measures and equally massive resources have been deployed not only in Australia, but also worldwide, in order to counter violent extremism. Despite all of this, we are still vulnerable to mass murder even in our places of worship. As a Muslim, I feel not only distraught and concerned for the future of our Muslim communities, but I am at the same time, deeply shocked and frightened of what will happen next, when, by whom and why.

Answers to these questions we have to find together. There are no easy answers to acts of terrorism such as this one in New Zealand. But it is clear that we are no longer safe no matter where we are, who we are and what we do.

Terrorism knows no limits, no boundaries and does not discriminate on the basis of religion, race, colour or ethnicity. It has been wrongly assumed, especially in the mass media which often poison our peaceful and harmonious life here in Australia, that the acts terrorism are only associated with certain regions of the world, especially the Middle East, and that they are caused by particular religious beliefs or practices.

Acts of terrorism have been disproportionately and quite unjustly, and I believe deliberately, been associated with Islam and Muslims, which we have always rejected as false and factitious. In this process of blaming one community or one religion for the acts of terror and murder of innocent human beings our Muslim community has often been accused of not doing enough to discourage, condemn and even thwart acts of terrorism in the name of religion of Islam.

We have always come out of our way to defend our values of freedom, liberty, democracy, social harmony and peaceful coexistence. However, we are now in a position to fear for our own communities safety and security.

It is not the right moment now to dwell into the multiple reasons as to why we as community are unable to predict and prevent acts of terror and recognize their signs before it is too late. This debate needs to take place and we have to do it together and cooperatively and it should involve schools, and families, religious communities and mosques, state institutions, security and law enforcement agencies. However, let me also emphasize that in order for this debate to take place in fairness, we need to be honest to each other and we have to have this debate in a political environment, which will be conducive to peace and harmony. In recent years we have witnessed enormous pressure and one sided accusations against Islam and hysterical demonization of Muslims and our culture in some media and even political discourse which may have contributed to some extent to some individuals to become encouraged indirectly, to use violence to achieve their own Luciferian, godless and criminal aims against their fellow humans because they are Muslims.

Freedom of speech is often used as justification for spreading hatred against particular religions or groups. Muslim communities are among the most vulnerable indeed, but the hate speech which sometimes lead to violent extremism and murder is not limited to Muslim haters alone. There are other targets as well. What is most frightening, my dear friends, is what I would like to call a “mainstreamisation” of racism and hatred against immigrants, Muslims or non Muslims alike, as well as against our native people, custodians of this land, or particular culture or way of life.

It is now becoming clearer that on the political horizon in Australia as well as in the media, there appears to be an increasing tendency of extremism, xenophobia, islamophobia and anti-Semitism, albeit disguised as freedom of speech, or a care for ordinary Australians etc. etc. These anomalies in the past used to be relegated to fringe politics. But in recent years this worrying trend is becoming more mainstream both in Europe and the United States and as of lately in Australia as well.

We are deeply concerned to see some former mainstream political figures, from both conservative and the progressive side of politics, that have now embraced these racist ideologies in their quest for political power encouraged by global rightwards ideological and political shifts against liberalism and rule-based liberal world order. I believe we must be calm but vigilant and ought to work cooperatively to counter these trends in Australia. My own Bosnian Muslim community will work with other faith communities in order to recognize any evil designs and act upon it in timely manner and in the spirit of our cooperation and harmony.

Let us therefore not allow this horrendous terrorist evil and Luciferian act of mass murder in New Zealand makes us loose sight of our values we share in common and which built together in Australia. Values of peace, tolerance, harmony and common destiny. May Almighty God protect our community and our country. May God bestow peace and solace to families and friend of those innocent Muslims who perished at the hand of terrorist attack in Christ Church.

Mufti: Jasmin ef Bekric