

UK mosques urged to install panic alarms and safe rooms

US Islamic group says British centres at greater risk than in other western country since the murder of Drummer Lee Rigby

An American Islamic group has been advising British mosques on security measures, including the installation of safe rooms and panic alarms, warning that they are at greater risk than in any other western country.

The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) has discussed its revamped security regulations with the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) in light of the murder of Drummer Lee Rigby, 25, in Woolwich, south-east London, which it said had even provoked attacks in the United States.

The security improvements encouraged by CAIR, America's largest Muslim advocacy group, encourage the building of transparent fences around mosques, wire screens on windows, designated security officials, three-inch-thick doors, panic alarms and safe rooms.

Ibrahim Hooper, a spokesman for CAIR, said: "From the outside it definitely seems UK mosques are more at risk than anywhere, including the States. There have been a number of recent incidents targeting UK mosques, groups like the English Defence League marching on mosques and a spike in violent right-wing groups."

Ibrahim Mogra, assistant secretary general of the MCB, said, while a panic alarm that could instantly alert police might in certain areas be installed, it was vital mosques did not become too security conscious. "We don't want mosques going overboard, where it's almost like a fortified place. We want these places to be open, and seen to be welcoming places that people would not hesitate to visit. Clearly our American friends have shown concern for us and have shared their safety and security measures. Although not all are relevant, we can learn from each other's experiences. The common foe is a criminal we wish to keep out."

According to Tell Mama, the government-funded monitoring project that records anti-Muslim attacks, about 12 mosques have been targeted since Woolwich, including one in Grimsby where three petrol bombs were thrown. Counter-terrorism police are investigating whether an arson attack on a Somali community centre in Muswell Hill, north London, was in response to the killing of Rigby. The letters EDL were found freshly painted on the building's walls, although the far-right group denies any involvement. Tensions have also been inflamed by Old Bailey hearings last week documenting a planned terrorist attack on an EDL demonstration that prosecutors say would have sparked a "tit-for-tat spiral of violence and terror" across the country.

Fiyaz Mughal, director of the conflict resolution charity Faith Matters, said too many mosques remained vulnerable to attack in the aftermath of Woolwich. Mughal said that, of the UK's 1,500 mosques, 1,300 urgently needed to improve security. He added: "There are a significant number of mosques that don't have CCTV, that don't do an audit of their lighting around their building. Many of these mosques you can walk into without anybody asking anything. The vast amount of mosques really need to reconsider their safety measures. I would classify them as vulnerable, given the changing climate since 7/7. But Woolwich is a huge turning point and if the mosques don't realise that, they really need to wake up to it."

Hooper said his group had recently contacted the FBI after a mosque in Georgia was vandalised with apparent reference to the murder of Rigby. The sign for the Islamic Centre of North Fulton was spray-painted with the phrase "London Justice".

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2013/jun/08/uk-mosques-panic-alarms-safe-rooms>

{Invite (mankind, O Muhammad) to the Way of your Lord (i.e. Islam) with wisdom (i.e. with the Divine Inspiration and the Qur'an) and fair preaching, and argue with them in a way that is better. Truly, your Lord knows best who has gone astray from His Path, and He is the Best Aware of those who are guided.} (Holy Quran-16:125)

{And who is better in speech than he who [says: "My Lord is Allah (believes in His Oneness)," and then stands straight (acts upon His Order), and] invites (men) to Allah's (Islamic Monotheism), and does righteous deeds, and says: "I am one of the Muslims."}] (Holy Quran-41:33)

The prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "By Allah, if Allah guides one person by you, it is better for you than the best types of camels." [al-Bukhaaree, Muslim]

The prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) also said, "Whoever calls to guidance will have a reward similar to the reward of the one who follows him, without the reward of either of them being lessened at all." [Muslim, Ahmad, Aboo Daawood, an-Nasaa'ee, at-Tirmidhee, Ibn Maajah]