

WORLD

Homeless man charged in London mosque stabbing



Muazzin Rafat was stabbed whilst leading prayers at a London mosque

London

A British court on Saturday charged a 29-year-old homeless man with causing grievous bodily harm and possessing an illegal knife he used to stab a mosque leader during prayers.

Suspect Daniel Horton stabbed London Central Mosque's muazzin Raafat Maglad during daily prayers on Thursday.

London police quickly ruled out a terror motive.

Maglad was treated at a London hospital and returned to the mosque for Friday's

evening service with his arm wrapped in a sling.

"I forgive him. I feel very sorry for him," Maglad told reporters on Friday.

"To me, as a Muslim, I don't need to put any hatred in my heart."

Prosecutor Tanyia Dogra said Maglad had suffered a wound to his neck.

She also told the court that the two men knew each other because Horton had come to the Regent's Park area mosque in northwest London several times over the years.

Horton was remanded in custody ahead of another court hearing on March 20.

Egypt court acquits Mubarak's sons over stock exchange case



Ousted Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak and his two sons Alaa and Gamal faced a number of legal proceedings following the 2011 uprising that ended his three-decade rule

Cairo

An Egyptian court yesterday acquitted two sons of former Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak and six others in a case known in the Egyptian media as stock exchange manipulation.

A judicial official said that the Cairo criminal court decided to acquit Alaa and Gamal Mubarak and the other defendants of any wrongdoing in the case.

Mubarak's sons were arrested in September 2018 for alleged stock market manipulation were released on bail days later.

Among those acquitted with them was prominent businessman Hassan Heikal, son of the late writer Mohammed Hassanein Heikal.

Since the 2011 ouster of Hosni Mubarak, a number of legal proceedings have been launched against the three-decade ruler and his relatives.

The "stock exchange manipulation" case as it is known in Egypt dates back to 2012, when Egypt's state prosecutor referred the six suspects to court "for illegally obtaining more than two billion Egyptian pounds (\$128.5 million)".

Mubarak's sons were accused of "profiting and obtaining illegal financial gains" from the sale of a bank.

The verdict puts an end to the judicial proceedings against Mubarak and his sons.

Taliban, Afghan forces clash on first day of violence reduction period

- Taliban fighters attacked Afghan forces in Balkh province

- The two sides have fought for control over parts of Balkh province for years

Reuters | Kabul

Taliban fighters and Afghan security forces clashed in parts of Afghanistan on Saturday, a day after a week-long "reduction in violence" was announced, but the incidents did not spark immediate alarm on either side.

If the violence reduction period is observed successfully, the United States and the Taliban will sign an agreement on Feb. 29 that could lead to a pullout of thousands of U.S. troops after nearly two decades in the country.

Taliban fighters attacked Afghan forces in Balkh province in the early hours of Saturday, according to the spokesman for the provincial police and head of the provincial council.

The attack was confirmed by Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid in an audio message to Reuters. He said an Afghan forces convoy tried to enter territory controlled by the group.

The two sides have fought for control over parts of Balkh province for years.

The Taliban spokesman also



An Afghan security force member stands guard at a security tower where two U.S. soldiers were killed a day before in Shirzad district of Nangarhar province, Afghanistan



Afghanistan President Ashraf Ghani delivers remarks to US military personnel beside US President Donald Trump during a surprise visit at Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan

confirmed similar clashes in other parts of the country, adding that the violence reduction understanding covered specific actions and areas and all incidents of firing should not be

considered a violation of the understanding, which, he stressed, was "not a ceasefire".

There were no immediate details on the casualties in the clashes.

Meanwhile, speaking to journalists on Saturday morning, General Scott Miller, who commands U.S. forces and the NATO-led non-combat Resolution Support (RS) mission in Afghanistan, addressed the issue of what would constitute a breach of the understanding.

"It is about observable trends showing a reduction in violence and I am confident we will be able to understand that on a daily basis and as more days go on we'll have better understanding of what the trends are," he said standing alongside the Afghan defense and interior ministers.

Previous attempts at negotiating peace agreements have been scuttled by Taliban attacks on international forces, most recently in December last year when an attack on a U.S. military base put talks on hold.

Pilot in Kobe Bryant helicopter crash counselled by FAA after 2015 incident

Reuters

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) faulted the pilot of the helicopter that crashed in January killing basketball great Kobe Bryant and eight others for violating flight rules in a 2015 incident.

The FAA said Ara Zobayan was piloting an AS350 helicopter in May 2015 when he violated rules governing the airspace around Los Angeles International Airport.

Zobayan was expecting clearance through the airspace but air traffic control declined to approve the request because of reduced visibility due to weather, according to enforcement records released by the FAA under the Freedom of Information Act late Friday.

The FAA report said while the communication with controllers was taking place, the helicopter improperly violated flight rules by entering restricted airspace without authorization.

The report added that if Zobayan "properly planned and reviewed current weather at



Debris is seen as the site of the helicopter crash that killed Kobe Bryant and eight others in a screen grab taken in Calabasas, California, U.S. January 27, 2020 and released by the National Transportation Safety Board

LAX, he would have been able to anticipate the required action to "transit" the airspace.

"Proper coordination should have included an earlier initiation of communication to allow time for receiving a clearance," the FAA report added.

The Los Angeles Times reported on the 2015 incident earlier on Friday.

The FAA report said Zobayan was counseled and added he "admitted his error, took responsibility for his action, and was willing to take any other necessary steps toward compliance." The FAA report added he "was cooperative and receptive to the counseling."

Zobayan was killed in the January crash along with Bry-

ant, 41, his 13-year-old daughter, Gianna, and the other six onboard.

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) said earlier this month the two engines of the helicopter that crashed in hazy, cloudy weather on a California hillside last month showed no evidence of a "catastrophic internal failure."

The interim report said examination of both rotor assemblies found damage "consistent with powered rotation at the time of impact."

The findings, while preliminary, pointed to no obvious signs of mechanical problems that may have contributed to the fiery crash.

NTSB board member Jennifer Homendy said in January that clouds, fog and limited visibility reported in the vicinity of the crash would be a key focus of the investigation.

Zobayan, an experienced aviator certified as an instructor, was navigating by visual orientation, not by instrument guidance, during the entirety of the ill-fated flight, the NTSB said.