

Speech: PM statement following terror attack in Finsbury Park: 19 June 2017

This morning, our country woke to news of another terrorist attack on the streets of our capital city: the second this month and every bit as sickening as those which have come before.

It was an attack that once again targeted the ordinary and the innocent going about their daily lives – this time British Muslims as they left a mosque having broken their fast and prayed together at this sacred time of year.

Today we come together – as we have done before – to condemn this act and to state once again that hatred and evil of this kind will never succeed.

The government's Emergency Committee, COBRA, has just met and I can set out what we know about what happened, and the steps that we are taking to respond.

Just after twenty-past midnight, the Metropolitan Police received reports that a van had been driven into a crowd of people on Seven Sisters Road in Finsbury Park.

Officers were in the immediate vicinity as the attack unfolded and responded within one minute.

Police declared it a terrorist incident within 8 minutes.

One man was pronounced dead at the scene; 8 injured were taken to 3 separate hospitals; while 2 were treated at the scene for more minor injuries.

The driver of the van – a white man aged 48 – was bravely detained by members of the public at the scene and then arrested by police.

The early assessment by the police is that the attacker acted alone.

Our thoughts and prayers this morning are with the family and friends of the man who died and those who were injured.

On behalf of the people of London – and the whole country – I want to thank the police and the emergency services once again for responding as they always do with great professionalism and courage.

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.

This was an attack on Muslims near their place of worship. And like all terrorism, in whatever form, it shares the same fundamental goal.

It seeks to drive us apart; and to break the precious bonds of solidarity and citizenship that we share in this country.

We will not let this happen.

When I stood here for the first time as Prime Minister last summer I spoke about our precious belief in the Union – not just the bond between the four nations of the United Kingdom – but the bond between all our citizens, every one of us, whoever we are and wherever we are from.

At the heart of that bond is a belief in the fundamental freedoms and liberties that we all cherish; the freedom of speech; the freedom to live how we choose and yes, the freedom to practice religion in peace.

This morning we have seen a sickening attempt to destroy those freedoms; and to break those bonds of citizenship that define our United Kingdom.

It is a reminder that terrorism, extremism and hatred take many forms; and our determination to tackle them must be the same whoever is responsible.

As I said here two weeks ago, there has been far too much tolerance of extremism in our country over many years – and that means extremism of any kind, including Islamophobia.

That is why this government will act to stamp out extremist and hateful ideology – both across society and on the internet, so it is denied a safe space to grow.

It is why we will be reviewing our Counter-Terrorism strategy and ensuring that police and security services have the powers they need.

And it is why we will establish a new Commission for Countering Extremism as a statutory body to help fight hatred and extremism in the same way as we have fought racism – because this extremism is every bit as insidious and destructive to our values and our way of life and we will stop at nothing to defeat it.

Today's attack falls at a difficult time in the life of this city, following on from the attack on London Bridge 2 weeks ago – and of course the unimaginable tragedy of Grenfell Tower last week, on which I will chair another meeting of Ministers and officials later today.

But what we have seen throughout – whether in the heroism of the ordinary citizens who fought off the attackers at London Bridge; the unbreakable resolve of the residents in Kensington; or this morning the spirit of the community that apprehended this attacker – is that this is an extraordinary city of extraordinary people.

It is home to a multitude of communities that together make London one of the greatest cities on earth.

Diverse, welcoming, vibrant, compassionate, confident and determined never to give in to hate.

These are the values that define this city.

These are the values that define this country.

These are the values that this government will uphold.

These are the values that will prevail.