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Crimes

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and Springfield Mayor Sid Leiken issued a joint statement supporting Muslim and Arab American communities.

"Harassment, discrimination and hate crimes are not acceptable and will not be tolerated here," Torrey said in the statement.

City of Eugene spokeswoman Jan Bohman said minorities in Lane County are expressing concerns that they may become targets of hate crimes similar to those that took place after Sept. 11, 2001.

Eugene has seen a few incidents of harassment and vandalism this month that may have been racially motivated. The first incident of harassment was reported March 24.

Police spokeswoman Pam Olshanski said a white woman of Sikh faith was confronted while waiting for green light at the intersection of 24th Avenue and Hilyard Street shortly before 7 p.m.

The woman noticed a man in another car who was staring at her. The man then got out and walked to her passenger side window, circled around to her driver side window and pointed at her with both index fingers in a "weapon formation," Olshanski said.

After the light turned green, the woman left and called the Human Rights Commission and then EPD. No words were exchanged in the incident, which left the woman afraid for her safety.

EPD arrested Jeffrey Marc Cohen, 28, who Olshanski said admitted taking part in the incident. He was charged with a bias crime of harassment because the victim thought a bias — her faith — precipitated the incident. Cohen said he was just making a "what's up" gesture, Olshanski said.

"There was this assumption after 9-11 that anyone with a turban is from the Middle East," she said, adding that follow-up interviews are being conducted to determine the crime. A charge of bias has a stiffer penalty.

Togo's and Dunkin Donuts restaurants also have been vandalized many times since Sept. 11, 2001, co-owner Bill Newman said. Newman is a native of Portugal and

"How do you learn to hate like this? These are ignorant people."

Bill Newman
Co-owner Togo's

Joseph Mungra, the other co-owner, is originally from India.

More recently, Newman said a drive-through window was smashed on "Day 1 of this crap," referring to the first day of the war with Iraq. Other incidents included broken windows and spray-painted messages such as, "Die pigs die" and "We don't like you people in our community." Newman said that an Iraqi flag was once thrown into one of the broken windows.

"How do you learn to hate like this?" Newman asked. "These are ignorant people."

Associate Director of Public Safety Tom Hicks said he does not expect any hate crimes to occur on campus, adding protests in support of or against the war should not lead to hate-crime incidents. He said the Department of Public Safety is working with EPD in asking people to report any incidents.

"In these kinds of circumstances, there will be people expressing their points of view," Hicks said. "Our job as public safety is to allow free speech to occur in a civil and responsible manner."

University Islamic studies Professor Timothy Gianotti agreed with Hicks, saying it is unlikely that any hate crimes will occur on campus. He added that if any hate crimes occurred, they would be condemned by the majority of students and faculty.

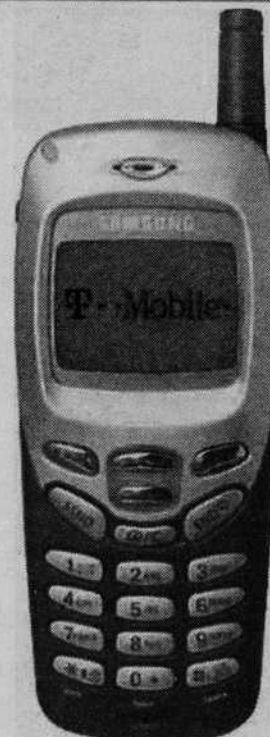
"I have tremendous faith in the University of Oregon ... and the larger community," he said.

Olshanski said EPD is taking a "no-tolerance stance" and is asking people to report any incidents. To insure reporting of hate crimes, the department has conducted outreach programs, along with human rights groups and the FBI, to teach citizens how to make accurate reports.

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