

Mosque shootings kill 49 people; white racist claims responsibility

Graphic video of attack livestreamed by shooter to world

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Associated Press

CHRISTCHURCH, New Zealand — At least 49 people were killed in mass shootings at two mosques full of worshippers attending Friday prayers in an attack broadcast in horrifying, live video by an immigrant-hating white nationalist wielding at least two rifles.

One man was arrested and charged with murder, and two other armed suspects were taken into custody while police tried to determine what role they played.

"It is clear that this can now only be described as a terrorist attack," Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said, noting that many of the victims could be migrants or refugees.

She pronounced it "one of New Zealand's darkest days."

The attack shocked people across the nation of 5 million people, a country that has relatively loose gun laws but is so peaceful even police officers rarely carry firearms.

The gunman behind at least one of the mosque



People wait outside a mosque in central Christchurch, New Zealand.

AP Photo/Mark Baker

shootings left a 74-page manifesto that he posted on social media under the name Brenton Tarrant, identifying himself as a 28-year-old Australian and white nationalist who was out to avenge attacks in Europe perpetrated by Muslims.

Using what may have been a helmet camera, he livestreamed to the world in graphic detail his assault on worshippers at Christchurch's Al Noor Mosque, where at least 41 people were killed. An attack on a second mosque in the city

not long after killed several more.

Police did not identify those taken into custody and gave no details except to say that none of them had been on any watch list. They did not immediately say whether the same person was responsible for both shootings.

At least 48 people, some in critical condition, were being treated at Christchurch Hospital for gunshot wounds, authorities said.

While there was no reason to believe there were any more suspects, the prime

minister said the national threat level was raised from low to high. Police warned Muslims against going to a mosque anywhere in New Zealand. And Air New Zealand canceled several flights in and out of Christchurch, saying it couldn't properly screen customers and baggage.

Police said the investigation extended 360 240 miles to the south, where homes in Dunedin were evacuated around a "location of interest." They gave no details.

Ardern alluded to

anti-immigrant sentiment as the possible motive, saying that immigrants and refugees "have chosen to make New Zealand their home, and it is their home. They are us."

As for the suspects, the prime minister said, "these are people who I would describe as having extremist views that have absolutely no place in New Zealand."

Witness Len Penha said he saw a man dressed in black enter the Al Noor mosque and then heard dozens of shots, followed by people running out in terror.

Penha, who lives next door, said the gunman ran out of the mosque, dropped what appeared to be a semi-automatic weapon in his driveway and fled. He said he then went into the mosque to try to help the victims.

"I saw dead people everywhere. There were three in the hallway, at the door leading into the mosque, and people inside the mosque," he said. "I don't understand how anyone could do this to these people, to anyone. It's ridiculous."

He added: "I've lived next door to this mosque for about five years and the people are great, they're very friendly. I just don't understand it."

He said the gunman was wearing a helmet with some

kind of device on top, giving him a military-type appearance.

In the video that was apparently livestreamed, the gunman spends more than two minutes inside the mosque spraying terrified worshippers with bullets again and again, sometimes firing at people he has already cut down.

He then walks outside, where he shoots at people on the sidewalk. Children's screams can be heard in the distance as he returns to his car to get another rifle. The gunman then walks back into the mosque, where there are at least two dozen people lying on the ground.

After going back outside and shooting a woman there, he gets back in his car, where the song "Fire" by the English rock band The Crazy World of Arthur Brown can be heard blasting. The singer bellows, "I am the god of hellfire!" and the gunman drives away.

The second attack took place at the Linwood mosque about 5 3 miles away.

Mark Nichols told the New Zealand Herald that he heard about five gunshots and that a prayer-goer returned fire with a rifle or shotgun. Nichols said he saw two wounded people being carried out on stretchers past his automotive shop.

Fine: Forgiveness program could help homeless climb out of debt

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they can't pay fines, advocates say.

Kaino is often willing to reduce or even forego fining people at Municipal Court if he knows they are homeless or have little, if any, financial means.

But when people don't show up, the court can't know their situation and has few options but to issue a failure to appear and keep adding fines to the underlying ticket.

For Crone, it long felt wiser to avoid court hearings. After all, who knows what will happen if you put yourself at the mercy of the judge.

There are several models across the country for fine forgiveness or clean-slate programs. There are special courts that try to ease the burden of fines and fees for infractions that the homeless are often ticketed for, so-called quality-of-life crimes like urinating in public, consuming alcohol in public, trespassing or camping in parks.

A subcommittee appointed by the homelessness task force is still trying to figure out exactly how such a program would work on the North Coast. These programs can come with significant costs to cities. Subcommittee members are already seeing how difficult it could be to try to address problems faced by the homeless and still be fair to everyone.

After all, even people who have housing may



Sam McDaniel talks with a customer at his market in downtown Astoria.

Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

struggle to pay court fines, said Jonah Dart-McLean, the city's parks maintenance supervisor, who serves on the subcommittee.

"We're trying to figure out what the solutions are so we're not excluding people who are maybe on the fringe of being homeless," he said.

The subcommittee is moving slowly, but hopes to have an update for the task force at a meeting in April.

The benefits of this kind of program are clear, they say.

It has the potential to not only give people more options to deal with fines, but to also give them a path forward, said Alan Evans, the executive director for Helping Hands, a nonprofit that offers sobriety and re-entry programs to the homeless.

Community service allows people to give back and integrate with their community in a healthy way, said Evans, who serves on the subcommittee.

Court records and debt are often huge barriers for the

homeless as they try to regain stability.

"Part of their re-entry into society is to take care of those fines," Evans said. "Now, when you're attempting to get your life back in order and back to a place where you may be able to sustain affordable housing in our community, a \$500 or \$750 fine hanging over your head could be the difference between you getting to the point where you can sustain yourself or not."

He believes many people

will leap at the opportunity to work off their fines.

Hansen, the police department's homeless liaison officer, has identified several homeless people he thinks would benefit from fine forgiveness. Like Crone, they possess a key trait: They are ready to do the work to better their situations.

Hansen believes fine forgiveness works well for this type of person. Crone, he said, "has the will to take care of things to be a responsible citizen."

The right direction

A month after his court hearing, Crone sat tucked in a corner at the Astoria Downtown Market on Commercial Street. Sam McDaniel, the market's owner, lets Crone and several others who are homeless or recently homeless and struggling to stay sober hang out in the store.

"This is my little safety zone," Crone said.

For Crone, the market is a place to get away from habits, temptations and the myriad issues he may encounter on the streets. He sometimes rests there before heading off to a work shift elsewhere.

He is working with Hansen to patch together volunteer hours with several nonprofits, but has not made much of a dent in his required 40 hours.

Nor does the Municipal Court's leniency in February mark the end of his financial struggles.

He estimates he owes well over \$100,000 in unpaid hospital bills and court fines that have accumulated and long since gone to collection agencies here and in other states. His credit is shot. He works at odd jobs under the table, worried that an on-the-books job would bring collection agencies down on his head.

"It's frustrating," Crone said. "A lot of it's in collections. Just the stuff I had here — that doesn't even touch the beginning of it all."

But, he said, it is a big step in the right direction.

Warrenton: Struggles with homelessness, sees a growing problem

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through the winter.

Unlike Astoria, Warrenton has mostly been able to forgo the kinds of difficult policy discussions over how to provide services that are tied to dealing with a larger homeless population.

In the past three to five years, though, Workman believes the city has seen an increase in the number of people who stay during the warmer months. It was why he and his officers hoped to develop a formal strategy this year for how they address issues like camping

and how they refer people to social services.

"Because we want to be consistent with people," Workman said, adding, "There's always a small percent that do commit crimes ... but over the last couple years we've seen everything from people who are homeless as a lifestyle choice to they're homeless for a reason like they lost a job, or family circumstances."

Workman believes the homeless population went down with the shift to cold weather this year, but Lampi says Warrenton feels

very different from when he was growing up.

He and his young children have frequently run into people who appear to be homeless during walks on trails near Tansy Point. Though he's not worried for his safety, it has made him hesitant to take his children on the trails because he doesn't know what they will encounter.

Bridgens described a camp full of trash on Port of Astoria property off Harbor Drive that she and her husband brought to the Port's attention and helped clean up in the last week.

She knows of other camps on property owned by the Nygaard family.

Several businesses have actively cleared brush around buildings in the last year to make the areas less attractive for clandestine camping. In Hammond, Workman said the Point Adams Research Station took down a lot of shrubbery for the same reason.

Last year, police received a number of calls about homeless camps and conducted a major sweep of large encampments in wooded areas not far from the Goodwill parking lot.

During a joint meeting between the City Commission and the city's Park Advisory Board in January, park board members briefly noted their concerns about more visible drug use and homelessness at the Skipanon River Park near downtown.

Meanwhile, the group behind the Warrenton Warming Center has had to shift what it offers in the last year. They are no longer able to provide emergency shelter, according to City Commissioner Rick Newton. Instead, the group has provided lunches at differ-

ent locations. They plan to hold a lunch at Lighthouse Park at noon this Sunday.

Panhandlers at spots like the intersections near Fred Meyer or Costco remain the more visible signs of Warrenton's homeless. While they are allowed to be there, police occasionally have to intervene if a person is causing a safety issue by darting between cars or aggressively panhandling.

"It's hard because I think there are people with legitimate needs," Workman said, "and there are people who are using this as a part-time job."