

# 9/11: A Shockwave Across the World

Twenty years ago my mum sat in her flat in London having her lunch. She was watching the TV when suddenly there was a newsflash. She watched a replay of a plane hitting the North Tower of the World Trade Centre in New York. Then, like most of the world, she watched in horror as a second plane hit the South Tower.

9/11 was perhaps one of the most defining moments of the 21st century. Shaking the world to its core, the first time we learned about mass terrorism and its devastating impact. But the media taught people another word that day: “Islamophobia”.

September 11th, 2001 was a pleasant autumn day, warm but not humid<sup>1</sup>. Like the calm before the storm. US President George Bush was at a school in Florida<sup>2</sup>, it was like any other normal day. Suddenly, at 8.46am a plane crashed into the North Tower of the World Trade Centre<sup>3</sup>, killing many upon impact. Many more who were trapped above the impact zone would die later when the twin towers collapsed. At 9.03am, 16 minutes later a second plane hit the South Tower<sup>4</sup>. This was no longer an accident; this was an attack.

Later, at 9.37am a third plane hit the western side of the Pentagon<sup>5</sup> in Washington D.C. Many feared the White House would be the next target. Back in New York, 56 minutes after being struck, the South Tower collapsed and 33 minutes later the North Tower collapsed<sup>6</sup>. The war on terror and the rise of Islamophobia had truly begun.

Later that day President George Bush addressed the U.S. He said, “America counts millions of Muslims amongst our citizens, and Muslims make an incredibly valuable contribution to our country...They need to be treated with respect.”<sup>7</sup> But he also talked about war. War on the people who caused this loss of lives. At Ground Zero he said: “...the people who knocked down these buildings will be hearing from all of us soon.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [What if the weather had been different on 9/11?](#) Published September 10th 2012 by Fred Campagna.

<sup>2</sup> [9/11 anniversary: Breaking the news to George W Bush: 'That's when he became the president'](#) Published September 11th 2021 by Greg Milam.

<sup>3</sup> [9/11: A timeline of the September 11 attacks visualized](#) Published September 10th 2021 by Nick Routley.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> [Read George W. Bush's speech to Muslims after 9/11](#) Published January 31st 2017 by Abby Hamblin.

<sup>8</sup> [The Rhetoric of 9/11: Bullhorn Address at Ground Zero \( 9-14-01\)](#) Published September 14th 2001 by American Rhetoric.

In the following days, the events of 9/11 dominated the media. Newspapers talked of revenge. They talked about war. They talked about evil. Many people felt enraged that Al-Qaeda had done this. How could they get away with killing almost 3,000 people? People started to take their anger out on Muslims. After all, they reasoned, Al-Qaeda was an Islamic terrorist group.

Days after 9/11, in London, the effects of Islamophobia were starting to be seen. My mum's friend, who was Sikh and wore a turban, was taking the tube home on the London Underground. He was harassed by others and threatened. And he wasn't even Muslim. Just brown. He didn't feel safe taking the train anymore and he started using taxis.

Across the Atlantic Ocean, only four days after 9/11, Texas-born Mark Stroman, grabbed his gun. He felt anger and hatred at those who had caused these events. He attacked anyone who looked brown, killing two people and injuring another. Amazingly, the man who was injured, Rais Bhuiyan, tried to save Mark Stroman from death row<sup>9</sup>. He didn't succeed but he forgave Mark, who ended up regretting his choice of hate. In Mark's last moments he said: "Hate is going on in this world and it has to stop. Hate causes a lifetime of pain."<sup>10</sup>

Shortly after 9/11, in 2001, hate crimes against Muslims spiked rapidly with almost 500 victims in the US alone<sup>11</sup>. In 2000, religious hate crimes in the US against Muslims accounted for roughly 2%<sup>12</sup> of all religious hate crimes by 2001 this figure had shot up to 27.2%<sup>13</sup>! Interestingly, from 2010-2016 more attacks in the US were carried out by Anti-Muslim groups than Muslim groups and more people were killed because of white extremists<sup>14</sup>.

The events of 9/11 sent a shockwave across the world, affecting those all over the globe. During 2017, in Canada, 46% of the population had a negative view of Muslims<sup>15</sup>. In New Zealand in 2019, 51 Muslims were shot dead while attending Friday prayers<sup>16</sup>. And many Muslim women

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.wbur.org/kindworld/2019/11/26/change-of-heart> Published November 26th 2019 by Yasmin Amer.

<sup>10</sup> [Post-9/11 'Arab Slayer' Mark Stroman's Last Words Offer Message Of Peace](#) Published 21st July 2011 by John Rudolf

<sup>11</sup> [Perpetuating Islamophobic Discrimination in the United States](#) Published Spring (in the US) 2021 by Janna Ramadan

<sup>12</sup> [2000 Hate Crime Statistics](#) (Page 11) (I figured out these percentages as it didn't display the percentages mentioned in this document.) Published in 2000 by the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

<sup>13</sup> [Federal Bureau of Investigation - Uniform Crime Report](#) (Page 9) Published 2001 by the Federal Bureau of Investigation

<sup>14</sup> [Ideological Motivations of Terrorism in the United States, 1970-2016](#) (Page 5) Published November 2017 by Erin Miller.

<sup>15</sup> [Nearly half of Canadians view Islam unfavourably, survey finds - National | Globalnews.ca](#) Published April 4th 2017 by Adam Frisk.

<sup>16</sup> [Death Toll in New Zealand Mosque Shootings Rises to 51 \(Published 2019\)](#) Published May 2nd 2019 by Charlotte Graham-McLay.

have been harassed for wearing a hijab in public<sup>17</sup>. Islamophobia is everywhere from the UK to Canada, even in New Zealand.

Some media sources are biased against Muslims and spread misinformation. For example, a person walked into a mosque in Canada in 2017 and shot Muslims while they were praying, killing 6 and injuring 19. Later, Fox News tweeted claiming the only suspect of this attack was of Moroccan origin<sup>18</sup>. However, there was actually just one suspect, a Non-Muslim French-Canadian<sup>19</sup>. Even after police clarification, Fox News didn't remove their misleading tweet that the suspect was Moroccan until the Canadian government intervened<sup>20</sup>. Why? Is a brown Moroccan more likely to be a terrorist than a white French-Canadian?

Recently in Auckland an ISIS sympathizer from Sri Lanka stabbed people at a supermarket<sup>21</sup>. My mum's side of my family is from Sri Lanka and is Muslim. Personally, when you hear another Muslim person, from a community that your family is from, attacked others, you worry for your family. Will they face harassment because another Sri Lankan stabbed others? Will others look at them and think they are terrorists? After the attack, Jehan Casinader wrote: "That's why I'm angry, because Friday's attack makes me ashamed to be Sri Lankan."<sup>22</sup> I think this quote perfectly explains how many feel, but why should Muslims feel ashamed when another Muslim commits a crime?

Many media sources give more coverage to Muslim terrorists than terrorists from other groups. On average, a Muslim perpetrator gets 4½ times more media coverage than other groups<sup>23</sup>. This often causes people to get the wrong idea about how many Muslims are terrorists. The media puts foreign-born Muslims in a worse light, giving them an astounding 36% coverage<sup>24</sup> when they are responsible for 5% of terrorist attacks<sup>25</sup>. This can lead to people having an exaggerated idea of the "threat" Muslims pose.

The media has greatly contributed to the rise of Islamophobia. People may not admit it, but the media hugely influences us. But if we had a more diverse group of people delivering the news we would be more likely to see all sides of a story. Sure, we have Muslims telling their stories,

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<sup>17</sup> [What It's Like to Be Harassed for Wearing a Hijab](#) This is an example of some incidents that happen. Published October 3rd 2018 by Arij Mikati.

<sup>18</sup> [Fox News deletes false Québec shooting tweet after Canadian PM's office steps in](#) Published February 1st 2017 by Ashifa Kassam.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> [ISIS supporter shot dead after New Zealand shopping mall 'terrorist attack'](#) Published September 3rd 2021 by Angus Watson and Jessie Yeung

<sup>22</sup> ['He's not one of us': Jehan Casinader responds to terror attack](#) Published September 5th 2021 by Jehan Casinader.

<sup>23</sup> [Yes, the media do underreport some terrorist attacks. Just not the ones most people think of.](#) Published May 13th 2017 by Erin M. Kearns, Allison Betus and Anthony Lemieux.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

but not enough on mainstream media. A more diverse range of people reporting on the news perhaps might help get rid of media bias.

In the last 20 years, social media has enabled individuals to become broadcasters. Back in 2001 social media was nonexistent but now, when most people can so easily access the internet, extreme views and misinformation can quickly spread. This too has contributed to the rise of Islamophobia.

There are 1.8 billion Muslims in the world<sup>26</sup>. Islamophobia can affect them, but not just them. This hate can affect people who are just brown. It affects me as it affects part of a community I identify with. It might affect you as well.

9/11 was a horrific event, it claimed many more lives than those who died on that day, whether it was Muslims, victims of hate crimes, or others who committed those hate crimes. I know of people who have been harassed because of the media's portrayal of Muslims, I know people who have been shot because of Islamophobia. Thousands of Muslims, all across the world, have been killed because of Islamophobic attacks in the past two decades<sup>27</sup>. Thousands more have had hate crimes committed against them<sup>28</sup>. The media has a great influence on all of us and 9/11 was so much more than just a terrorist attack. It changed the course of the 21st century. It has affected almost everyone, in ways we don't expect, even 20 years later.

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<sup>26</sup> [Which countries have the 10 largest Christian and Muslim populations?](#) Published April 1st 2019 by Jeff Diamant.

<sup>27</sup> [List of Islamophobic incidents - Wikipedia](#) (I went through this can added up all the deaths from 2001-2021 which added up to about 36,644)

<sup>28</sup> [FBI — Hate Crime](#) (I went through all the hate crime reports from 2001-2019 and added up the amount of victims of Anti-Islamic hate crimes which came to 4,234 and that is in the US alone and only the reported hate crimes.)