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Boston Marathon explosions: How acts of terror affect the Muslim community

“Oh God, please don’t let it be a Muslim.” It’s the thought in the minds of many in the Muslim community as the perpetrators and the reason for the twin bombings at the Boston Marathon finish line remain unknown.

By: [Alyshah Hasham](#) News reporter, Published on Wed Apr 17 2013

Katherine Bullock’s immediate response to the [Boston marathon explosions](#) was the same horror and shaken sense of security shared across the world.

“It’s terrible, all those people suffering, the people that have died, been injured or lost their limbs,” she thought.

Then the Muslim academic and [University of Toronto professor](#) offered up a fervent prayer. “Oh God, please don’t let it be a Muslim.”

“It’s the thought that goes through every Muslim’s mind,” says [Imam Sikander Ziad Hashmi](#) of the Kingston Islamic Centre.

It remains unknown who is responsible for the twin bombings being investigated as “acts of terror” that killed three people and injured 176 on Monday at the Boston Marathon finish line. But that makes little difference to the Muslim community’s automatic fear of an Islamophobic backlash.

“I think there is definitely a political response that Muslims have internalized,” says Jasmine Zine, a [sociology professor at Wilfrid Laurier University](#) with a research focus on Muslim youth growing up in a post-9/11 world. She is heading to a [conference on the study of Islamophobia](#) in California on Wednesday and a colleague called Monday night to ask: “What is this now going to produce in terms of hassle for us at the border?”

For the Muslim community, tragedies like Boston’s are “a double whammy” of grief and fear, says Hashmi. When he was leaving Monday night to go the Canadian Tire, “my wife was like ‘don’t go out,’ ” he said.

Like other Muslim community leaders across North America, Hashmi has publicly condemned the “despicable act,” along with all terrorism, extremism and violence around the world. It is an important message for any religious and community leader to send but Muslims have to be especially vocal, he says.

“There is always this sense that we need to perform as being good Canadians, that we’re not a threat, that we have to set the record straight . . . because it’s always called into question whenever there is an act of violence that receives media attention. ”

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In the wake of tragedies like Boston's or the Algeria gas plant attack in January linked with [four young men from London, Ont.](#), Hashmi says his resolve to work toward a safer and more peaceful world strengthens. But he is also left feeling helpless. "I've condemned terrorism and extremism so many times in sermons. Should I keep talking about it? What should I do? And how do you get that frustration and sadness across to people like the average Joe who is naturally very angry today and I don't blame him for that."

"This is a time for people to come together," says Bullock quietly. "We grieve along with everyone else, we condemn (terrorism) along with everyone else, we want to seek out the perpetrators like anyone else."

"I pray that it's not a Muslim and if it is, I'm sorry and if there was any way I could reach out to these people to stop it I would."