

BRITON SURVIVES MOSQUE MASSACRE IN PAKISTAN

Lutfur Rehman, 32, of Kingston, South West London, was one of the survivors of the bloody mosque massacre that took place on Friday 28th May at Model Town Mosque in Lahore, Pakistan.

Lutfur, a British citizen, had travelled to Lahore on a business trip. He was eager to attend Friday prayers and arrived early, gaining a seat in the third row of the hall which shortly became filled with over 1,500 worshippers. The Friday service started at 1.30pm and shortly after 1.40pm, machine gun fire could be heard outside at the entrance of the courtyard. The Imam paused the service and asked worshippers to remain calm. Lutfur said, "gunfire became louder and louder and more continuous". People started shouting and banging on the front doors and were opened by worshippers inside. People took shelter inside the mosque and the Imam stood up and requested everyone to start praying. An attacker pursued as the doors were being closed and jammed his AK47 gun through the doors, spraying gunshots inside the hall, killing many of the elders present in the front rows. The gunman was finally repelled back and the doors closed. Gunfire continued in the courtyard. The gunmen then moved to the side of the building smashing windows and firing inside. Lutfur dialled the emergency services on his mobile, but was told by the operator in a casual voice, "don't worry, we'll send someone", but lacked the assertive response expected. A hand grenade explosion then went off, blowing off doors and gunmen then entered into the hall. Lutfur said, "They hurled 3 hand grenades and shot dead the Imam". Lutfur added, "I hid behind a pillar and feared for my life as people to my left and right were hit and fell to the ground. They stopped moving". One man said "I'm going to die anyway, I may as well try to save everyone else" and then heroically ran towards the gunman. The attacker sprayed several bullets at the man who fell dead to the ground in a pool of blood. Some worshippers also tried to overpower the gunman but were shot dead as they approached him. Another worshipper grabbed the attacker from behind and pinned him to the ground, tying his arms and legs, keeping him restrained for over 40 minutes until Police arrived on the scene.

Another gunman wearing a suicide-bomb vest was brought down in the courtyard by brave worshippers. Lutfur said, "People forced the terrorist down, he tried to detonate himself but the bomb malfunctioned and then he attempted to shoot himself, but the shot was not fatal". All gunfire ceased after 40 minutes and ambulances arrived shortly thereafter, followed by trailing, incumbent police.

Lutfur said, "I feel fortunate to be alive. There were bodies riddled with bullets everywhere, I still remember the constant gunshots and grenade blasts. Words cannot describe the massacre I saw. I still can't believe I survived." Lutfur added, "I don't understand why they have done this? We are a peaceful community that helps others. Our motto is 'Love for All, Hatred for None', we have never hurt anyone".

The situation continues to deteriorate in Pakistan. Friday's attacks appear to have spurred on other extremist groups with mounting death threats across the country, resulting in two further Ahmadi Muslims being killed in separate attacks over the weekend. Extremist neighbours of the dead then distributed sweets to the community upon hearing of their murder.



Lutfur Rehman