

# Muslim scholar under fatwa claims police fail to take his plight seriously

Mark Macaskill

**A** Muslim scholar in Scotland who claims to be living under a fatwa said police have failed to take the threat on his life seriously for fear of being accused of Islamophobia.

Paigham Mustafa is believed to be the only UK citizen living under the threat of execution since Salman Rushdie, author of *The Satanic Verses*, left Britain to live in the United States. Police Scotland launched an investigation last year, at the request of Mustafa's lawyers, to establish if a fatwa issued by several mosques in the west of Scotland more than 20 years ago constitutes an offence under the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Act 2021.

Mustafa claims the investigation has failed to hold Scottish mosques, including Glasgow's central mosque, to account or to establish if the fatwa has been removed. His lawyers insist that Mustafa and his family have been living in fear for more than two decades.

"I have grave concerns that Police Scotland have not taken my reports seriously and one of the reasons is a fear of being accused of Islamophobia," said Mustafa.

The scholar angered Muslim clerics after publishing texts that were perceived to have disparaged the Prophet Mohammed. Mustafa said his efforts to engage with Muslim clerics in Scotland and have the fatwa rescinded had been ignored.

He has become concerned for his safety since Rushdie was attacked before a lecture at the Chautauqua Institution in New York state on August 12. The 75-year-old was stabbed in the neck and torso and suffered serious injuries which he is recovering from.

The attack took place more than three decades after Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, then Iran's supreme leader, issued a fatwa or religious edict, calling on Muslims to assassinate the author a few months after *The Satanic Verses* was published.

Mustafa will publish a book next month which aims to dispel "the many myths and fabrications that shroud Islam, including those concerned with blasphemy, apostasy and free speech". He said it would "likely upset many people, including the Muslim clergy", adding: "In view of the attack against Rushdie in New York, it will draw some attention when the



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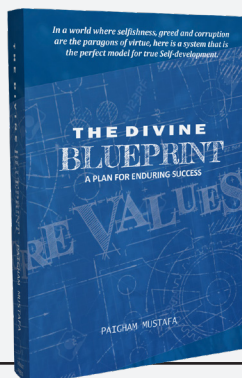
book is launched. The fact that the police have not done anything about the existing fatwa makes my situation more precarious."

Police Scotland has said the 2021 hate law does not apply as it requires an intention to stir up hatred against a group of persons, rather than an individual.

Chief Inspector Jamie Harrison said: "A thorough investigation of Mr Mustafa's concerns was carried out and no criminality was established. Advice was also sought from the Islamic community and Police Scotland's equality and diversity unit in order to provide the most suitable advice to Mr Mustafa. Trained officers carried out an extensive security survey for Mr Mustafa, the outcome of this has been communicated with him."

Glasgow's central mosque did not provide a comment.

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/muslim-scholar-under-fatwa-claims-police-fail-to-take-his-plight-seriously-hvfv2frj7>



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