

Resolution of Council

8 April 2019

Item 3.1

Vale Christchurch Massacre Victims

Minute by the Lord Mayor

To Council:

On Friday 15 March 2019 a gunman entered two Muslim places of worship in Christchurch, New Zealand, shooting and killing 50 people, aged between three and 77 years old. A further 50 people were injured in the shootings, some seriously.

More lives would have been endangered but for the bravery of two men. One man, Naeem Rashid, originally from Pakistan, was shot and killed inside the Al Noor Mosque when he attempted to stop the gunman. Another man, Afghan-born Abdul Aziz Wahabzadah, who was worshipping at the Linwood Islamic Centre with his four children, chased the gunman as he returned to his car to pick up another weapon. He followed the gunman back into the mosque, confronting him with a gun that the gunman had dropped. The gunman fled driving off in his car after Mr Aziz threw the gun through his window.

The horror of this shocking terrorist attack was magnified by the gunman livestreaming his actions on Facebook Live from the time he began driving to the Al Noor Mosque and ending with his driving away after committing multiple murders. Also alarming is the gunman's motivation for the attacks, expressed in a lengthy manifesto, a blend of extremism, discredited conspiracies and white nationalist racism.

As horrific as this crime was, it has brought out the best of humanity, especially in Christchurch and New Zealand where it took place. The mosques where the murders occurred and others across New Zealand and around the world have become the focus of vigils, messages, and floral tributes. School children and others have performed the haka and waitata to honour those who had died. One week after the murders, 20,000 people, including New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, attended an open-air prayer service, broadcast and televised nationally. A national remembrance service took place on 29 March 2019, two weeks after the attacks. Services were also held in Sydney and many other cities in Australia and internationally.

At Sydney Town Hall the flag was flown at half-mast and the Town Hall was lit in red, white and blue, the colours of New Zealand's national flag. I offered the City's strong support to the City of Christchurch and its Mayor Lianne Dalziel.

A key to this response is Jacinda Ardern's compassionate, principled and thoughtful leadership. Speaking in the New Zealand Parliament on 19 March 2019, Prime Minister Ardern said:

"Mr Speaker, Al salam Alaikum.

"Peace be upon you. And peace be upon all of us.

"Mr Speaker, March 15 will now be forever a day etched in our collective memories. On a quiet Friday afternoon, a man stormed into a place of peaceful worship and took away the lives of 50 people. That quiet Friday afternoon has become our darkest of days. But for the families, it was more than that. It was the day that the simple act of prayer — of practicing their Muslim faith and religion — led to the loss of their loved ones' lives.

"Those loved ones were brothers, daughters, fathers and children. They were New Zealanders. They are us. And because they are us, we, as a nation, we mourn them. We feel a huge duty of care to them. And Mr Speaker, we have so much we feel the need to say and to do.

"One of the roles I never anticipated having, and hoped never to have, is to voice the grief of a nation. At this time, it has been second only to securing the care of those affected, and the safety of everyone. And in this role, I wanted to speak directly to the families.

"We cannot know your grief, but we can walk with you at every stage. We can. And we will surround you with aroha, manaakitanga and all that makes us, us. Our hearts are heavy but our spirit is strong."

Prime Minister Ardern commended the courage of those who put the safety of others above their own and the work of the ambulance staff and the health professionals who assisted the victims of the terrorist attack.

Ardern told Parliament that the person responsible for the murders would face the full force of the law in New Zealand, continuing:

"The families of the fallen will have justice. He sought many things from his act of terror, but one was notoriety. And that is why you will never hear me mention his name. He is a terrorist. He is a criminal. He is an extremist. But he will, when I speak, be nameless. And to others, I implore you: speak the names of those who were lost, rather than the name of the man who took them."

I have adopted this approach in this Minute.

The massacre in Christchurch has provoked many responses and much discussion, not only about the murders themselves, but the importance of supporting and respecting diversity, the abuse of social media and the internet, the role of our security services and importance of maintaining strong firearms laws.

While many of these issues are complex and finding solutions will be challenging, we must address them if we are to prevent further Christchurches.

New Zealand, which is recognised for its civilised and humane policies, particularly in the way it welcomes refugees, is already leading the way. I am sure these policies will not be changed by this act of terrorism. For this, and its response to the initial horrific attack, New Zealand must be commended.

Recommendation

It is resolved that:

- (A) all persons present in the Chamber stand for one minute's silence to mark the lives of the people who died during the horrific terrorist attack at Christchurch Muslim places of worship on Friday 15 March 2019;
- (B) Council commend the humanity of the people of New Zealand in their response to these horrific murders; and
- (C) Council commend Ms Ardern and the New Zealand Government and Parliament for the swift, principled, humane and rational policy response to the many issues raised by this horrific crime.

COUNCILLOR CLOVER MOORE

Lord Mayor

Moved by the Chair (the Lord Mayor), seconded by Councillor Scott –

That the minute by the Lord Mayor be endorsed and adopted.

Carried unanimously.

Note – All Councillors, staff, press and members of the public present stood in silence for one minute as a mark of respect to those lost in Christchurch.

Note – The Lord Mayor acknowledged the presence of Mr Bill Dobbie, New Zealand Consul-General for New South Wales and Queensland, and presented him with a Condolence Book from the City of Sydney.

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