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US murders motivated by hatred against Muslims, father female students says

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Yusor Mohammad Abu-Salha (left) and her sister, Razan Mohammad Abu-Salha

The father of the two female students killed along with another student in the US on Tuesday says the killings were motivated by hatred against Muslims.

On Tuesday evening, Craig Stephen Hicks, 46, shot dead Deah Shaddy Barakat, 23, his wife Yusor Mohammad Abu-Salha, 21, and her sister, Razan Mohammad Abu-Salha, 19, near the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill campus.

Police said they were examining whether the murders were religiously motivated, but stressed that initial investigations indicated a dispute between Hicks and his victims over parking spaces led to the killings.

"This was not a dispute over a parking space; this was a hate crime," said Mohammad Abu-Salha, the psychiatrist father of the two young Muslim women.

"This man had picked on my daughter and her husband a couple of times before, and he talked with them with his gun in his belt," he added.



He told the local News & Observer newspaper his daughter had voiced concerns about the shooter last week.

"Honest to God, she said, 'He hates us for what we are and how we look,'" Abu-Salha was quoted as saying by the newspaper.

"We understand the concerns about the possibility that this was hate-motivated and we will exhaust every lead to determine if that is the case," Chapel Hill Police Chief Chris Blue said.

Earlier, the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR) condemned the shooting deaths of the Muslim students.

The Muslim civil liberties advocacy group called on the US police to investigate the motive behind the murders.

"Based on the brutal nature of this crime, the past anti-religion statements of the alleged perpetrator, the religious attire of two of the victims, and the rising anti-Muslim rhetoric in American society, we urge state and federal law enforcement authorities to quickly address speculation of a possible bias motive in this case," said CAIR National Executive Director Nihad Awad.



A recent survey suggests that many Americans believe it is acceptable to ridicule Islam, highlighting the depth of anti-Islamic sentiment and widespread Islamophobia in the United States.

According to the HuffPost/YouGov survey, 46 percent of Americans thought it was acceptable to mock Islam, while 44 percent said it was unacceptable to mock Christianity, a consequence of the “Islamophobia project” promoted by US media outlets.

In an interview with Press TV last month, American scholar and journalist Dr. Kevin Barrett said the Zionist-controlled media is seeking to “destroy” Islam while promoting hatred against Muslims.

“The Zionist-dominated media here in the United states is helping foment a clash of civilizations against Islam, but which is secretly designed not only to destroy Islam, but also Christianity,” Barrett said.