

St. Paul Human Rights and Equal Economic Opportunity Commission (HREEOC)

Resolution on Vandalism at Mosques

WHEREAS the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR) reports that there have been six incidents targeting mosques in Minnesota in 2023, and four were within the months of April and May;

WHEREAS a door was spray painted at 24 Somali Mall, where Masjid Omas Islamic Center is located, in January 2023;

WHEREAS windows and the main door were smashed with a heavy object at Ummatul Islam Mosque on April 10, 2023, which resulted in damages estimated at more than \$10,000;

WHEREAS someone set fire to the bathroom at Masjid Omar Islamic Center in 24 Somali Mall on April 23, 2023;

WHEREAS someone set fire to the third-floor hallway of Mercy Islamic Center, which houses Masjid Al Rahma on April 24, 2023. There were approximately 100 people in the building at the time the fire was set, including 50 children in the day care program located in the basement of the building;

WHEREAS a masked person threw a chunk of concrete at Masjid As Sunnah in St. Paul on May 12, 2023 just minutes after congregants had left after morning prayers;

WHEREAS the Oromo American Tawhid Islamic Center in St. Paul was set on fire on May 17, 2023, which resulted in over \$250,000 of damage;

WHEREAS arrests have been made in four of the six incidents, with three of the incidents believe to be committed by the same individual;

WHEREAS international, national and state laws protect the rights of individuals to choose where, when and how to worship according to their religion;

WHEREAS the Islamic religion is the second largest religion worldwide with an estimated 1.8 billion followers, which is approximately 25% of the world's population;

WHEREAS it is the right of all those living in St. Paul to freely choose where and how they worship and not be afraid when attending their place of worship;

WHEREAS Saint Paul is home to Muslim community members who feel unsafe attending their place of worship due to the fear of recurrent attacks, and we have an obligation to our collective safety in our city;

WHEREAS the Saint Paul Human Rights and Equal Economic Opportunity Commission (HREEOC) cannot remain silent in the face of Islamophobia and ongoing attacks against a place of worship in Minnesota; and

WHEREAS HREEOC expresses gratitude to the City of Saint Paul which, by City Council resolution dated May 24, 2023, transferred \$30,000 of American Rescue Plan funds to "Project PEACE - Technology and Equipment as a Response to Violence." These funds through the Project will assist with the purchase of audio and video equipment to increase security and surveillance of houses of worship in Saint Paul.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

HREEOC condemns the ongoing Islamophobic attacks on Mosques across the Twin Cities.

HREEOC stands in solidarity with members of the Muslim-American community and calls on the City to help address safety challenges as requested by the Mosques impacted by the ongoing attacks and asks for the following:

1. The individuals committing these acts of violence and hatred be prosecuted and held responsible to the full extent of the law;
2. The requests of Muslims regarding the need for resources for the safety of their places of worship are seriously considered, and extra precautions must be given for their sense of security until there is an end to the ongoing attacks;
3. Further explore additional funding sources to improve security at mosques and deter future attacks;
4. Eid-al-Fitr, the religious celebration at the end of the fasting of Ramadan, is considered for recognition as a citywide holiday; and
5. The establishment of an independent citywide oversight and investigations of attacks against Mosques and places of worship.

Sources:

- <https://sahanjournal.com/policing-justice/minneapolis-st-paul-mosque-fires-vandalism-community-reaction>
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- <https://www.mprnews.org/story/2023/05/12/st-paul-mosque-vandalism-is-5th-attack-in-minnesota-this-year>
- <https://www.startribune.com/minnesotans-on-edge-after-suspected-arson-burns-st-paul-mosque/600275675/?refresh=true>
- <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2017/04/05/christians-remain-worlds-largest-religious-group-but-they-are-declining-in-europe/>