

Scotland Teen Jailed Over Mosque Terror Plot

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A 17-year-old boy who planned a violent attack on a mosque in Greenock, Inverclyde, has been sentenced to 10 years in custody after admitting to preparing an atrocity reportedly inspired by neo-Nazi ideology.

The teenager, who cannot be named for legal reasons, was stopped at the very door of the Islamic centre in January this year when police intercepted him carrying a military-style rucksack filled with dangerous items, including a Glock-type air pistol, ammunition, ball bearings, gas cartridges, and aerosol cans.

He had befriended the mosque's imam under false pretences, joined the centre's WhatsApp group claiming to seek spiritual guidance, and filmed the interior of the building in preparation for an attack.

Court evidence revealed that the boy had become radicalised online during late 2024, immersing himself in extremist forums and consuming material that glorified violence. He reportedly admired Adolf Hitler, Benito Mussolini, and Norwegian mass murderer Anders Breivik, whom he referenced as inspirations for his plot.

Prosecutors said he was not only harbouring extremist views but actively preparing to act on them. He posted on Telegram about his intentions, recorded videos inside the mosque corridors, and even created footage superimposing a hand carrying a semi-automatic pistol onto the scene.

Lord Arthurson, presiding at the High Court in Glasgow, described the planned assault as “a diabolical atrocity involving extreme violence and multiple deaths.” The judge added that the teenager had reportedly requested his attack be livestreamed, a detail highlighting his intent to spread fear beyond his immediate community.

The teenager was arrested in January as he arrived at the Greenock mosque with his rucksack. Police confirmed the weapons and materials found inside suggested a carefully premeditated attack.

In court, he pleaded guilty to two terrorism charges. He was sentenced to 10 years in detention, with an additional eight years of supervision on licence following release.

Lord Arthurson said the boy’s conduct was only halted because of timely police intervention, emphasising the scale of potential loss of life that was narrowly prevented.

The case exposed how the teenager deliberately exploited community trust to advance his plan. After gaining the confidence of the imam through repeated visits, he was able to access the building freely. This deception allowed him to record the centre’s layout on his phone, including fire exits and corridors, which prosecutors argued were crucial to his plot.

At the same time, he was reportedly boasting online to extremist contacts about his ambition to set the mosque ablaze and inflict maximum casualties. His dual behaviour highlighted both the deceptive nature of his scheme and the dangers posed by online radicalisation.

Sineidin Corrins, deputy procurator fiscal for specialist casework at the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service, said the teenager’s plan was “driven by racial and religiously motivated hatred” and proved he was prepared to turn extremist beliefs into deadly action.

“This heinous plan to attack those within his local community was prepared and driven by racial and religiously motivated hatred, and showed that he not only held neo-Nazi beliefs but was about to act on them to cause pain and suffering,” Corrins said.

The case is one of the most serious examples of far-right-inspired terrorism uncovered in Scotland in recent years.

Security officials have repeatedly warned about the vulnerability of young people to extremist content online. The boy's case highlights how extremist networks exploit social media platforms to spread ideology and attract recruits.

Analysts note that the rise of far-right extremism among teenagers poses potential risks to community safety and cohesion, as individuals may appear to be ordinary students or community members while secretly plotting violence.

The Greenock Islamic centre, which was the intended target, has been left shaken by the events. Community leaders stressed the importance of vigilance and the need for stronger safeguards to prevent similar threats in the future.

While the swift intervention by authorities prevented bloodshed, the revelation that a teenager could come so close to committing mass violence has raised serious concerns about the effectiveness of current counter-radicalisation efforts.

The case underscores the continuing threat of extremist ideologies targeting Britain's communities. It demonstrates both the success of law enforcement in preventing an atrocity and the ongoing challenge of stopping radicalisation before it escalates into attempted violence.

With the teenager now serving a lengthy sentence, attention is turning to how the UK can strengthen its defences against both online radicalisation and the extremist networks that prey upon vulnerable individuals.